



Nuffield Farming Scholarships Trust

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New entrants and opportunities in farming

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Executive summary

It is undoubtedly difficult to get a start in farming if you do not have the benefit of a family farm behind you. It is expensive and getting more so, as it becomes increasingly difficult to borrow the money required and that itself assumes you find a farm in the first place. Tenancies are short, high risk and competition from established farmers is high. Hard work and little monetary reward should mean that farming holds little attraction for the bright and young, but I have met many exceptional new entrants who have overcome huge obstacles to be able to farm and are loving it.

By the age of three I had decided to become a farmer. My family lived in the country with a large garden but no farm. I had my first real farm job at 18 and this convinced me that I had been right and farming was the life for me. I completed a BSc (hons) in Agriculture at Harper Adams where I met and married Nevil, northerner and aspiring farmer from inner city Sunderland, who had grown up without even a garden. After college we worked in a wide range of farm jobs acutely aware that to succeed we needed to learn many skills. Although not well paid, we saved hard, worked long hours and increased our capital worth, as well as attending courses in vocational skills that we thought might be useful. We applied for and were offered a 180 acre hill farm on Exmoor on a 5 year FBT and a long term promise. With the collapse of the sheep prices and the indirect effects of foot and mouth in 2001 we diversified into poultry production, built an abattoir and a direct sales business. In 2005 the family had expanded to 5 children and when our tenancy wasn't extended we moved to Higher Fingle Farm a 57 acre Devon County Council Farm.

With a growing family of aspiring farmers and a desire to progress, I set out on my Nuffield adventure to see what opportunities there are for

new entrants and what could be created. My study became a fascinating tour of amazing businesses from tiny to substantial. I concentrated on trying to identify some things that new entrants could use to get started and how the farming industry could help to increase those first step opportunities. I soon learnt that the complexity of land ownership, values and taxation all have a big effect on opportunity. Concentrating on looking at things I feel could be more easily changed I travelled to Eastern USA, Cambodia, Thailand, India, France and Brussels. I also travelled extensively in England as well as attending conferences and seminars. I learnt how essential education is to empower people to make their lives better, how precious clean, safe water is and how crucial hygiene is in food production. The businesses I visited varied from speciality hatching eggs, vegetable farms, and rice growers to large chicken rearing set ups. They were all committed, innovative and customer focussed, qualities that are needed in the modern farmer. Many were farming dreadful land, paying high rents and having to pay back huge borrowings. They didn't get much help, but most are not bitter and are not planning on giving up.

People have been leaving the land since the 16th century and over the years the status of the farmworker fell with the increase in mechanisation. The number of farmers and farmworkers is now at an all time low and although the colleges are full of life science students not many are planning to work in practical farming. The average age of a farmer is often quoted as 58, and the age of the farmworker is also worryingly high; and this is at a time when UK agriculture seems to be recognised more for its regulation and paperwork than as a customer focussed, innovative industry.

Only 10% of farmworkers are women and around 25% of higher level agricultural course students

are female (this drops lower for apprenticeships and practical courses), yet some of the most exciting businesses I visited were driven by amazing women. In an age of mechanisation, large bales and small bag sizes the traditional barriers to women working in mainstream agriculture no longer exist, but an image of a male dominated industry still persists. Lantra research in 2010 estimated farming needed 60,000 new entrants in the next 10 years. An industry that is still not doing enough to encourage women is missing out on a valuable skill resource.

As long ago as 1979 a government survey recognised that farming was in danger of becoming a 'closed shop' and warned that lower levels of innovation meant less business dynamism. Young people, both male and female, will bring innovation and enthusiasm that, if supported by experience, will drive the industry forward and make us proud to be British farmers.

Key recommendations

1. Leadership and cooperation is needed with a strategy to provide quality opportunities to encourage new entrants and their successful progression on the farming ladder.
2. A successful exit at retirement for established farmers is essential to create opportunities at all stages on that farming ladder.
3. Farming needs to address the lack of women in the industry. Small steps like using non celebrity farming female role models and ambassadors in schools and colleges to start dismantling prejudices and a more positive attitude in the farming press would help tremendously.
4. There needs to be a more flexible approach to land-use with more development of a partnership approach between landowner, agent and tenant. Short term farm business tenancies are not providing the opportunities that are favourable to a new entrant progressing as a successful business. It is in the interest of all partners to have an arrangement that works.
5. It's time for re-evaluation of the risks associated with new entrants. A landowner's patronage of the right new entrant will reap long term rewards for his estate.
6. The County Council farm estates are a unique thing and a valuable national asset which we need to promote and support before one of the few opportunities to get a start in farming is lost.
7. Farmers take note, it is in your interest to help and support these new entrants to make UK agriculture a thriving industry again. Without a family farm the new entrant often has no equipment to borrow, no mentor and needs to pay a fortune to have a day off. An informal network of mentors and someone to talk to could prevent a crisis and give the support a business needs to be a great success.

Disclaimer

The views expressed in this report are my own and do not necessarily represent those of the Nuffield Farming Scholarships Trust, or my sponsor, or any other sponsoring body.

1. Introduction

*"Tell me, what is it you plan to do
with your one wild and precious life?"*

Even though I had not been brought up on a farm - although my family did live in the country and had a large garden - by the age of three I had decided to become a farmer and my first real farm job at 18 convinced me that I had been right and farming was the life for me. I completed a BSc (hons) in Agriculture at Harper Adams where I met and married Nevil, northerner and aspiring farmer from inner city Sunderland, who had grown up without even a garden. After college we worked in a wide range of farm jobs acutely aware that to succeed we needed to learn many skills. Although not well paid, we saved hard, worked long hours and increased our capital worth, as well as attending courses in vocational skills that we thought may be useful.

After Elsa was born we applied for and were offered a 180 acre hill farm on Exmoor on a 5 year FBT and a long term promise. With the collapse of sheep prices and the indirect effects of foot and mouth in 2001 we diversified into poultry production, and built both an abattoir and a direct sales business. In 2005 our family had expanded to 5 children and when our tenancy wasn't extended we moved to Higher Fingle Farm a 57 acre Devon County Council Farm.

Are we a success? Some days it feels like we have done so much and others it feels like we have so much left to do. What next for us? The Council system encourages progression but where are the opportunities for the next step? Our children are having a great upbringing on a wonderful farm, but if they want to farm what opportunities exist for them?

So where are the new entrants?

Prior to the 18th century agriculture had been much the same across Europe since the middle



ages. Beginning as early as the 12th Century, some of the common fields in Britain were enclosed and became individually owned fields and the process rapidly accelerated in the 15th and 16th centuries. This led to farmers losing their land and their grazing rights and left many unemployed. Landless farmworkers became dependent on offering their labour to richer neighbours for a cash wage. While this may have offered a tolerable living during the Napoleonic wars when labour was in short supply and corn prices high, by 1830 and the time of the Swing riots the farmworker retained little of his former status except the right to parish relief. So the workers left the land and this leaving of the land has continued to this day. Between 1996 and 2009 (*Agristats using Defra data*) total farmworkers have dropped from 246,00 to 187,100. and full time farmers have declined from 170,000 to 147,000.

My Dad chose in the 1940s to train as a plasterer in Oxford and earned more in a day than his village mates did in a week on the farm. These same lads needed to get changed on a Friday before they lined up to receive their wages. Things have changed since then and the wages board has made sure that wages are reasonable but farming persists with an image of poor skills, poor working conditions and no opportunity unless you are born on a farm.

So why do we need new entrants?

British farming has been responsible for some of the great innovations in agriculture. Most children learn about the Norfolk four course rotation, Jethro Tull's seed drill and Robert Bakewell's selective breeding programs. All helped to drive (and feed) the great industrial revolution that made Britain Great. But what in agriculture are we famous for now?

We have all heard how the average age of a farmer is 58, but do you also know that 28% of all farmworkers are 55 or over and that the average age of the workforce is 44. It is dominated by males (81% of the workforce) and full-time staff only account for 83% of total employment with high levels of casual and seasonal staff (*Lantra 2009*). Workers are often highly skilled and experienced but lack formal qualifications with as many as 25% having no qualifications and only 17% having level 4 qualifications.

Matt Lobley of Exeter University talks about the 'succession effect' driving the business forward and stimulating discussion. He quotes a Government survey as long ago as 1979 recognising farming was in danger of becoming a closed shop and warned that lower levels of innovation meant less business dynamism.

Matt neatly sums up the challenge: How do we achieve a better balance between the undoubtedly valuable contribution of established farming families and the benefits of having new entrants?

And this report ...

Well it will try and answer some of these questions. It is not a complete answer but maybe it is a contribution. It is a personal view of mine alone, it's not scientific and much is from anecdotal evidence. At times I have wondered if anyone will bother to listen, but as a someone who is a new entrant at least I know how hard it is to get started and I certainly have an opinion on how things need to change!

And what have I left out?

One of the more interesting meetings I attended was a discussion on the Diggers and how we need a champion like Gerrard Winstanley today*¹. It was a thought provoking evening that illustrated the inequality of land ownership. The complex issues around land values, taxation and ownership directly affect opportunities for new entrants. Being just a simple peasant, while appreciating the effects of these issues, I have chosen to narrow this report down to things that are in our immediate power to change. It may be a while until the revolution.

¹ **The Diggers, led by Gerrard Winstanley in 1649-50, were groups of agrarian communists whose movement lasted under a year.*

2. Study tour

So this was the attractive bit: the travelling, the sunshine and the beaches. That was until the time came to go and leave the children and Nevil. Planning visits and trips was frustrating at times and distracted me completely from farm and family business, but it gave an opportunity for all the family to contribute their ideas. Alfred (10) thought Angkor Wat was essential and researched the history, Elsa (12) brought library books home about India and tried to teach me French. We got out the maps, studied National Geographic and sent lots of emails. I still have not been to Africa, but although Africa may not be in this report I might well be watching flamingos there as you read this. I travelled alone, I travelled in a group and I travelled with all the family and all the time I saw, learnt and experienced many things that will shape our lives in the future.

2a. USA – New York, Long Island, Pennsylvania, Hudson Valley

My visit was to an area of the USA that had been home to some of the original pioneer farms. The land had been cleared of woods and farmed by the first settlers but many areas have now returned to forest. The farms I visited included first generation farmers but also inherited farms that were being reclaimed from the woods to recreate a viable farm. Some of these visits I describe below but I apologise that there just isn't room for all.

2a (i). The Old Field Vineyard – Perry Baiz

North Fork, Long Island, used to be an area that grew lots of potatoes and cauliflowers for New York, but back in 1973 the first vines were planted and now a thriving wine industry exists with

mostly direct sales to the many tourists who visit each winery to have a \$4 tasting and then buy to take home. When we visited, however, it was not just a few tourists who were out and about but crowds that included families, couples and, bizarrely, stretch limos full of hen parties. Certainly from an agricultural point of view the area and its wine industry seemed a great success.

Old Field had been purchased by Perry's great grandfather and her father planted the first vines in 1974. Since 1997 all 12 acres have been vines and 95% of what they produce is sold direct from the farm. Perry and her mother make most of the wine, but they use the facilities at a more modern vineyard to make the red and buy in the grapes to make the whites. Pretty much everything was manual, except for netting the grapes with a nifty machine mounted on the tractor. Great emphasis was placed on sustainability and this seemed to be something that was important in the marketing. When pressed on why not organic, the risk of crop failure due to mildew and fungal diseases was thought to be the main reason, followed by the cost of registration and inspection. Perry had opted to study environmental biology before returning to the farm and found the UK's system of agricultural education something that she would have been interested in if it was available in the States. Her brother had decided not to farm and was a stunt man in Hollywood; however he came back each year to harvest the grapes. I'm not sure if his stunts had led to the other farm diversification that included the location of a blockbuster movie.

2a (ii). Cherry Valley Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) – Heidi Secord

Cherry Valley CSA has around 80 customers who pay \$600 in January and start collecting their

vegetables in May through to October. In September when produce was abundant they were receiving around \$40 a week in squash, garlic, potatoes, carrots, tomatoes, peppers and other wonderful fresh veg. The farm was also able to sell surplus produce at a local farmers' market and attended a number of garlic festivals each year to sell the high value garlic crop. The customers that I talked to thought that paying early in the year guaranteed that they would get the produce and they were keen for the farm to continue operating. In 2009 early tomato blight had destroyed the crop, but in 2010 abundant tomatoes meant the customers could take home basket loads. Although many were disappointed in 2009, they understood that the value of the CSA was being able to share in the bad times as well as the good, reconnecting people with the reality of food production. During my time in the States I saw many variations on the CSA themes which included buying clubs (paying \$40 a year for the privilege of buying from the farm stand) internet buying clubs and chicken shares. All had a fantastic level of commitment from the customer to support the young farmer to make a living.

Like any farming, margins were tiny and the work was hard. Heidi in common with many new entrants had a passion for farming and was living her dream. Heidi, from a non-farming family, finished a business degree then worked for the Peace Corps in Mali. On returning to the States in the late 1990s she decided that she wanted to farm and set about getting experience working for growers. Seeing 47 acres owned by Stroudsburg township not being utilised she approached them in 2005 with a business plan and managed to rent the land on a ten year lease for \$1 a year. Through determination and hard graft she has cleared and fenced 5 acres to produce the vegetables. That leaves the other 42 acres of woodland and scrubby overgrown land that has so much potential but needs so much more than 10 years to do it in. In the UK Heidi would have been able to apply for an environmental grant to help maintain the biodiversity and provide educational access. But in the States that support is not available so each step will be only be taken when the money allows.

Heidi's wish list was to install some irrigation, get her customers more involved with the physical work, find the money to build a classroom and have time to have more fun. Her husband Gary had recently started working full time on the farm and his extra support will, I hope, mean that she can indeed have a little more fun. Heidi was an impressive new entrant who was successful through sheer determination and strength of character.

2a (iii). Cranberry Creek – Mary Jean & Jeff.

When I was six, my Mum read to my brother and me the classic children's tale "Little House in the Big Woods". Laura Ingells Wilder (February 7, 1867 – February 10, 1957) was an American author who wrote the series of books documenting her pioneer childhood. In the 1860s her father cleared woodland and farmed both crops and livestock near Pepin in Wisconsin. When Laura was six the family moved west to better farmland and opportunities. Their tale is a lesson in how hard farming can be and how resourceful the pioneers were.

In the Pocono Mountains in Northern Pennsylvania similar wood clearance occurred and productive farming produced food for the urban populations of the east coast. Nowadays the area is woodland again, having regenerated in the last 65 years as farming become uneconomic and the area mainly residential.

On a scorching hot morning I hitched a lift to visit a 100 acre farm near Henryville. This was farmed by young couple, Jeff and Mary Jean, who had inherited the farm from Jeff's grandfather. Here, where there was little soil, an abundance of rocks and many trees, they were trying to recreate the fields that would have been cleared in the 1860s. Through the trees can be seen vast heaps of stones that form the field boundaries. These are rocks which are cleared each year as the extreme frosts bring more to the surface each winter.

For the last 4 years they have been selling free range eggs and vegetables locally, but were yet to make a living. To make the farm viable they had invested Jeff's 'trust fund' in a building that included a goat milking parlour, cheese preparation room and a cheese cave. It really was a lovely building clad with wood from the farm and with a wood furnace to heat the water. They are

just milking 12 goats to start the enterprise and were waiting to receive the final inspections to allow them to sell raw milk. They will then increase the numbers to 48 females.

Milk sold in the US is pasteurised at higher temperatures than in the UK and some consumers feel this kills off some of the inherent food value of the product. There is considerable interest in raw milk for this reason. Mary Jean was determined that she was going to get her license, both for economic reasons but also she believed raw milk to be healthier. Their wish list included an understanding vet (they had met with a certain amount of resistance to their being organic) and low cell counts.

2a (iv). Hudson Valley Garlic Festival

What an amazing event a garlic festival is. Heidi of Cherry Valley adds value to her garlic by making garlic vinegar, a simple but effective process resulting in a product with a long shelf life and bought for health benefits, not just for use in the kitchen. 47,000 garlic fans attended over the 2 days of the festival where a 3m by 3m pitch cost just \$125. Stallholders reported that sales were not as strong as in 2010, but compared with UK markets things were flying. Ever the market trader I had fun bringing English humour and style to the garlic market. Many of the stallholders had small farms with garlic being their main crop. Some were organic, most were not. All saw the

autumn garlic festivals as their main outlet with direct sales meaning their margins were high. With low prices for stalls even at the farmers' markets in the centre of New York, and a huge customer base, direct sales makes an attractive proposition for a small farm. This is so refreshing after the UK where bureaucracy and exorbitant costs are squeezing the margins of direct marketing.

2a (v). Somewhere in Minnesota – Rich Flick

The best thing about selling at a food festival is the camaraderie between stall holders. Early starts and bacon butties can lead to some interesting conversations. At Hudson Valley I learnt about farmers who have had similar successes and failures as myself. One character who is worth remembering, but sadly I never had time to visit, was Rich, who had just sold a small farm in Upstate New York (where the garlic was grown), moved his family to farm some land of his father-in-law's in Washington State and just bought a farm in Minnesota where he felt he finally had a viable family sized farm. He was going to grow corn and hogs, on a rundown farm that was in the tornado belt. After seeing the devastation a tornado can leave I am hoping that he can soon afford the insurance and that he has built the bunker (the house had no cellar) that was on his wish list.

Lessons Learnt in the USA

- ❖ New entrants are utilising marginal land that no one else wants to farm.
- ❖ If you are close to the customer find what he wants and sell direct to maximise returns.
- ❖ Don't be frightened to try something new, tastes change and the customer will change
- ❖ CSAs are an option for funding working capital and a guarantee of customer support.
- ❖ Hard work and determination are essential.



Mary Jean herding her goats

2b. France – Dordogne, Vallee de la Loire

I took 2 trips to France, the first being with Nevil, five Children and my 80 year old dad as babysitter. Travelling down to SW France we visited many duck farm and farmers' markets, coming back with loads of ideas to develop our business at home. I then had a peaceful trip around the Loire visiting farms and food businesses producing some fantastic artisan food, seemingly unhindered by the crazy regulations that are zealously applied in the UK.

2b (i). Val De Chandiere - Frédérique Chassin

Frédérique was a new entrant who had bought her small rundown farm in 1988. Old barns had been renovated to house guests, add value to the ducks and run an Auberge de Ferme

At Val De Chandiere batches of ducks were bought in at 14 weeks for 12 Euros then gavaged or force fed soaked maize for 15 days. They were then worth 50 Euros. Every 3 weeks batches of

120 were bought in then processed to make everything you could possibly want from a duck, foie gras, grillons, the list was endless! Frédérique seemed to find it unbelievable that in the UK we did not have a market for necks and gizzards. Here they were even selling the green offals.

The processing plant was of reasonable standard but nowhere near the levels of hygiene and maintenance that are required in the UK, and this was particularly disappointing for Nevil when he struggles at home with constantly changing legislation that is meant to be the same across the EU.

Top price product today went to Foie Entier at 133.33 Euros per kg, that's the whole lobes of liver in a tin. If you wanted cheaper then you could buy Bloc de Foie Gras that is pressed together, much better value at 90 Euros per kg. We currently retail fresh organic duck livers that weigh around 50g each at £9 per kg. A force fed canard foie will weigh around 500g.

2b (ii) Angers – Denis Rolleau

Denis farms 38ha with his brother in law and they started their business in January 2011. Half the farm is rented from his father and half from a non farming landlord. These are 9 year tenancies but as the landlord is not a farmer under French law he cannot live there so renewal of the tenancies is guaranteed. Free range chickens and guinea fowl are reared in 3 batches of 1000 birds. They are slaughtered at 90 days on the farm and sold direct to local customers. Their father started this business 25 years ago when he moved away from selling poultry to the local co-op and the partners are planning to continue the direct sales.

Two hen houses converted to laying hens (2,700), 220 ewes selling finished lambs to the co-op, rabbits reared and slaughtered for meat and wheat grown to feed the poultry makes this a neat system with mixed marketing. Belonging to a machinery co-op meant that all machinery needed for growing the wheat was hired from that source and they themselves only owned a small 2 wheel drive tractor. Denis and Andre have been able to take advantage of a supported bank loan for young farmers, with ability to borrow up to 150,000 Euros at 2.5%, and received the starting farming grant of 15,000 Euros. They are paying a rent of 125 Euros per ha with land priced at around 2500 Euros per ha. By engaging with the customer they were hoping to increase the direct

sales of eggs and lamb. Recently they had a farm open day with 300 people attending. Both felt they would like to increase their returns to be able to live completely off the farm income (without their wives working) and would like to rent a neighbouring 10ha to complete the farm. Denis and his wife explained that they felt the risk of farming is putting young farmers off, but to an English tenant I felt the risk was a lot less than in the UK.

2b (iii) ESA – Angers

We have hosted French agricultural students from ESA (Ecole Supérieure D'Agriculture D'Angers) on their work experience for 12 years now. During this period the college has expanded and attracted more life science students. The agriculture degree is a 5 year degree with short periods of work experience (stage) and specialisation in food processing, environment crops or livestock in the final two years. In the mid '80s 10% of the course members found jobs in practical farming. Five years ago it was 5% but now it is only around 1-2%. A new course is now run for older students who have had successful careers and wished to 'lifestyle' farm. With the strict land laws in France it is necessary to take a two year diploma before being able to purchase a farm and ESA had around 25 mature students completing this course.



Bridge over the Loire in France

Lessons Learnt in France

- ❖ Produce what the customer wants and get the best margin
- ❖ Connect with the customer.
- ❖ France gives new entrants lots of help but it is still not encouraging the young into practical farming.
- ❖ Strict land use laws keeps the price to a more realistic agricultural value.
- ❖ It's a myth about the French housewife being able to cook and shop any better than the British.
- ❖ Machinery rings and co-ops help reduce capital requirements and reduces market costs and stress.

2c. Cambodia

A trip to Cambodia was suggested by my fellow Nuffield Scholar, Michael Blanche, who thought that if all the older farmers had died during the Pol Pot regime and the following famines then there must be lots of new entrants. This was completely wrong, but I am so glad I went because Cambodia provided my defining Nuffield moment.

Desperately poor, with a young population that has suffered so much, a corrupt government, land concessions to the Chinese and a mostly peasant agriculture that barely feeds the country, the people of Cambodia couldn't be more friendly and happy. Agriculture employs more than 70% of the labour force and accounts for 30% of the GDP. Rice farming is the major agricultural activity, accounting for nearly one third of country's total agricultural value, but inefficient techniques and limited irrigation networks mean yield levels are low. It has been difficult to find actual data on the age of farmers but in a 2005 survey of 615 households (*Cai, Ung, Seboonsarng & Leung*) the average age of the farmer was 45.83 years, a quarter of farmers were women and total land

per farm was 1.34ha. The education of the household heads averages just 2.64 years. Teachers earn around \$60 per month, a factory worker \$80 dollars and a translator in the Hyundai factory \$350. The young are moving to the cities for better wages. Travelling through neighbouring Thailand (where agricultural exports increased by 22% in 2010) it looked possible that, with an organised agriculture and good infrastructure for distribution, Cambodia could achieve a farming system that would both feed the country and enable surplus for export to provide valuable hard currency.

2c (i) Rama Homestay, Kampong Cham-Kheang

Kheang runs a B&B in a shed on stilts with no running water or electricity, but she was welcoming and the food was good. Her mother kindly came and talked about farming in Cambodia. The life of a rice farmer on 4 ha is incredibly hard, with back breaking work and long hours for only a subsistence living. If she was lucky, when yield

and price were on her side, she could pay back the loan taken out at the beginning of the season, feed herself and have enough to save a little.

This scenario was in many ways similar to our own small family farms in the UK, but we don't starve if our crops fail and subsidies and tax credits mean that nobody needs to go hungry. So this was similar to farmers everywhere - but so different when conversation turned to the Pol Pot era. I found it quite overwhelming to talk to a lovely educated woman who was the same age to myself but at the age of 9 had been taken from her family by the Khmer Rouge to work on dam building and grew up in the years of war and famine. She believes that the only hope for Cambodia is education, but in the countryside where most still have no electricity, education and healthcare are poor. Hygiene practices are non-existent and access to good healthcare is unaffordable.

2c (ii) Krong Koh Kong – Noy

The forest seemed a good place to farm, far from the noise of tuk tuks and motos, with plenty of fruit and nuts to harvest. In the Pol Pot era the jungle was a place that Khmer Rouge didn't go and many Cambodians fled to the jungle to hide. Taking produce to market is a slow boat trip. Noy told us how the village we visited was innovative and good at its marketing.

Noy farms 5 ha. and told us how he made sure he had 'hard papers' to prove ownership. He was proud to tell us that since buying his land 4 years ago he had improved the soil and his yields of rice had increased. He was positive that farming had a future in Cambodia, but was worried about the misuse of sprays and fertilisers in an ecosystem that he was passionate about. When pressed as to why he farmed he eloquently explained the need to belong after spending his first 12 years in a refugee camp eating rice and dried fish. Owning and farming a piece of his homeland gave respect, security and freedom. He was innovative, young and positive but appreciated that he was only just starting to make a success of the farm. Facing the familiar problems of lack of capital, he seemed to have the resilience we saw in all the Cambodian people to be able to survive and enjoy life as it happens.

Lessons Learned in Cambodia

- ❖ Human resilience is awesome
- ❖ Farming is not just economics, land owning is more a passion.
- ❖ Hygiene is still a major killer and fresh water is an essential of life
- ❖ Women continue to miss out on education and opportunity.
- ❖ A good education will bring innovation and success.



Sugar cane ready for transporting to market, Cambodia

2d. India

Agriculture in India is one of the most important sectors of the economy. 66% of the workforce are employed in farming and according to the economic data for financial year 2006-07, agriculture accounts for 18% of India's GDP. About 43% of India's geographical area is used for agricultural activity. Dependence on imports and the food shortage crises in the 1960s convinced planners that India's growing population needed to be self sufficient in food to give political and financial stability. Agricultural improvement led to the Green Revolution with a resulting quantum leap in production of wheat and rice. Now a second green revolution is needed to give the required 4% annual growth.

Travelling extensively across India with a group of scholars we visited large dairies, vegetable growers, chicken farmers and pastoralists. India is an amazingly diverse country with an 'anything is

possible' attitude, terrifying traffic and a completely reckless attitude to hygiene.

2d (i) True Milk – Ludhiana

This was a substantial business with a large integrated dairy unit that sold their milk with the great marketing strap lines 'not milked by hand' and 'no flies'. After seeing cows and buffaloes milked into churns with very little hygiene I would certainly pay the extra 4 rupees for my plastic bag of clean milk. (34 rupees per L).

On 52 acres there were currently 900 cows, buying in forage under contract from 450 local farmers who delivered daily, and around 200 ladies owned the cows. Five ladies in self help groups each work one of four shifts, equal to 6 hours per day. They are collected in a van, have one day off

every 5th day and are paid a raw milk price for milk produced by their cows. The company facilitates the loan to buy the cows, they guarantee an income of 2400 rupees at the start and hopefully the lady will have additional income from calves. Food and vet expenses are taken out of the amount paid for the milk, making it possible to start a micro farming business with no capital and no land.

In the Indian culture these village ladies are unable to work, have no access to credit and the additional income and status that comes from owning the cows is immense. Philanthropy, yes, but also part of a focussed business plan that aims to milk 20,000 cows on 20 properties by December 2012.

2d (ii) The LIFE Network – Ilsa Kohler-Rollefson, Hanwant Singh Rathore

Rajasthan is a truly beautiful area of India, away from the huge urban areas and pollution. Traditionally grazed by sheep, goats and camels, the pressures of development and the expansion of national wild life parks are threatening change in this remote arid area.

The LIFE Network (Local Livestock of Empowerment) is a network of non-government organisations and individuals who are concerned about

the future of local livestock breeds and about the people who breed these animals and rely on them for their livelihoods. Ilsa Kohler-Rollefson, and Hanwant Singh Rathore, both vets, are part of the League for Pastoral Peoples and Endogenous Livestock Development (LPPs) and deliver the LIFE program. The LPPs (for short) believes in helping from within the community and much work is being done to improve the welfare and health of the livestock as well as helping the communities fight for their rights to maintain their traditional ways of life.

In a country that has huge potential and ability for intensive production and with a government that sees food production as a priority the traditional livestock farmers are struggling to survive. LPPs are working on developing new markets for novel products such as camel milk ice cream, camel wool and camel poo paper. These added value products also create jobs for the local women, especially widows in isolated villages. Empowerment of the women and education using both networking and training seems to be important in raising the standards of livestock production and profitability. Ilsa described how the life of women and girls had improved in the 20 years that she had been working there but compared to the opportunities my girls at home have there is still a long way to go.

Lessons Learned in India

- ❖ Education is a road to empowerment
- ❖ Although women provide much of the labour in agriculture they make very few decisions
- ❖ Micro credit projects are making a difference
- ❖ It's not always necessary to have land to farm
- ❖ Religion and culture have a huge influence on food production
- ❖ The caste system is the major factor in Indian Society.
- ❖ India will feed itself once they get the distribution, processing and refrigeration infrastructure developed.
- ❖ Attitude to hygiene and safety is reckless.
- ❖ Labour is cheaper than mechanisation and India has an inexhaustible supply of labour.
- ❖ A successful growing economy doesn't mean the poor will be fed.



Group of Indian farmers

2e. Great Britain

I started out thinking that to be a new entrant in the UK was hard, if not impossible, but I found plenty of new farmers to visit who were carrying out all sorts of innovative market-focussed farming. Most are still striving to progress, have a huge range of talents from practical farm skills, and food processing to social media, and most are desperately short of capital and opportunity. I love the south west of the UK not just for the beaches, but down here the land and small farms are ideal for the expansion of the organic and niche businesses that are a possible start for the would-be farmer.

The farming ladder has long been discussed to describe the progression through this industry. I still think it is a useful description, but as farming changes we need to look again what a career in farming is. The 'how many acres?' or 'how many cows?' is largely irrelevant as a measure of success. Is a 57 acre tenanted farm making a living for a family of seven successful or not?

To keep you inspired I cover some of the more interesting businesses I know, but they are only tip of the iceberg. All you established 3 generation plus farmers should get scared. There are some seriously good operators out there....

2e (i) Devon- Edward

I bought some weaners from Edward. He had been selling them through the market, but was keen on some private sales. His pig business is what a consultant would describe as micro; I would like to think of it more as the first steps of that farming ladder.

He had helped out as a teenager on a small old fashioned pig farm. The elderly owner had given up 10 years ago, but 2 years back Edward had bought some cheap in-pig gilts from market and had borrowed the now rundown buildings and a small area of land from his former employer. By selling weaners, finished pigs, some meat direct and buying carefully he had increased the number of his sows. All the work was done at weekends and in the evenings while holding down a full time manual job. He hoped that in the future he would be offered more land and was keen to try some calves.

Looking around, the place seemed semi derelict and would struggle to pass a farm assurance scheme, but the pigs were clean and well cared for, the ones I bought were fit and have grown well. With no formal agricultural education will Edward make it to the next rung of the ladder? The consultants will say no, but I would guess

that in 20 years' time he will still be farming, how much will largely depend on the opportunity.

2e (ii) Devon – the chicken thing

If Devon was in France the M5 would have a huge sign near Willand announcing the Protected Geographical Region of the free range chicken. As the supermarket sales of specialist chicken took off the local family firm of Lloyd Maunders recruited growers locally to meet demand. Often these contracts provided the small farm with the opportunity for the son or daughter to farm at home. Organic free range poultry in mobile houses is demanding physical work that requires a high standard of stockmanship to achieve targeted results. Most of the recruits had only ever kept small scale chickens before and the poultry industry had a whole new set of skills to learn. With a partnership approach working with the vet and using benchmarking and producer groups the west country became the top supermarket supplier for organic chickens.

The returns were good, the contracts were sound and the bank would lend money to buy land to fulfil them. Of course the chickens need round the clock care so then planning permission was needed for temporary housing of workers. In recent years these temporary caravans have been replaced with agriculturally tied houses and whole new farms have been created. Unfortunately some of these properties were immediately sold at a considerable profit which in many parts of Devon has made planners cautious of new applications, but many have been the foundation of a solid successful farm business.

The collapse of the organic market and high poultry feed prices is a serious concern for some of these businesses, but some see it as an opportunity for trying something else. Chicken Chris who has tried most things including marketing and barn conversions, runs three impressive chicken sites; two of meat birds and one of Colombian blacktail layers. These are all businesses that are suffering from tiny margins and over-supply. His answer is to start deer farming in amongst the chicken houses, utilising the grass that previously needed to be mowed and, if that doesn't work, he and his family are at least comfortable in the 5 bed eco house he has built.

2e (iii) Chickens are not just for meat and eggs

One of our favourite complaints in Devon is that hobby farmers are buying up all the small farms at crazy prices. There are a few crafty new entrants who are benefiting from this desire of wealthy hobby farmers for the good life, and are selling point of lay pullets and fancy fowl at life style prices. To my mind this is great marketing. As soon as the fox helps himself to the chickens the hobby farmers come back for more. I have looked at small businesses that are again the first steps, run as a businesslike hobby, and I have visited a business where the family is waiting for their house application to be approved after living in a caravan for 5 years. This farm not only bought and sold pullets (both hybrid and rare breed) but also hatched and fattened quails weekly for selling as feed for birds of prey.

2e (iv) Goats

I think it may be a sign, but I have visited and eaten a lot of goats in the last year. Meeting fellow Nuffield Scholar and goat meat farmer Marnie Dobson seemed to start a theme and I have been amazed at the potential of these versatile animals. I have visited lots of goat dairies. One of the busiest is 180 goats on just 9 acres producing raw and fantastic rinded goat cheese. The owners are new entrants who had been in the navy. They struggle to supply enough cheese to meet demand from retail customers and Michelin starred restaurants. Marnie is so positive about the future of goat that even Nevil hasn't complained too much about the billy kids I keep bringing home.

2e (v) Cheshire – David Nurse

David I met at Harper Adams. He had no family farm behind him and after college he travelled a bit, worked as a herdsman and was finally offered the tenancy on the farm where he had worked pre-college. After borrowing eye watering amounts of money 14 years later he works hard, has little holiday but is still looking to how he can progress and move the business forward. Most years he has made money and to my mind he is a success. David was offered the tenancy as his landlord's children did not want to farm. He had a

15 year tenancy initially that has now been extended for another 5. His landlord was a member of the co-op, Bollin Farmers (Cheshire) Ltd and recommended David to join. This has given him not just cheap prices on fertiliser and feed but bench marking and a useful network of local farmers. David's landlord took on what may be considered to some a risky tenant, but David has rewarded him by farming the land well, paying a good rent and looking after his asset.

2e (vi) Share Farming – a special relationship in Wales

Near Pwllheli, Wales, is the home of Rhys Williams, a grazing evangelist who runs a herd of 1000 cows. It just so happens that Rhys is also writing a Nuffield report on equity partnerships. Rhys farms in a share farm arrangement similar to what is popular in New Zealand where the land owner takes a share of the risk and the milker has access to capital and borrowing. Rhys was bought up in an agricultural community but had no home farm. Being keen on cows he worked as a herdsman. Despairing of finding an opportunity in the UK he moved to New Zealand and the opportunities a share milking contract would provide. A chance meeting with a landowner and business man back home in Wales gave the longed for opportunity to replicate the New Zealand system. The key to Rhys's system seems to be the trust between the partners in the share arrangement and he seems to have found the right platform to use his attention to detail and produce some pretty impressive results.

I was impressed, but I did feel that I would be cautious of such an arrangement myself, especially as I have become old and cynical.

2e (vii) Devon – Ben and share farming

Ben has been farming at Summerhill farm for 4 years. The farm was previously owned by a charity that has now been taken under the umbrella of the Soil Association Land Trust. This Trust has been established with two aims: to protect the countryside by acquiring and managing farmland sustainably; and to connect the public with the stewardship of the land.

Ben has a share farming agreement where he has taken over an established beef herd and farm infrastructure. Compared to our experience of taking a tenancy and having to buy everything from scratch the arrangement looks very attractive. It has meant that he has had the chance to buy into the farm with less borrowings and the arrangement has still let him develop his own ideas. With a luxury yurt business and organic goose enterprise the farm is now more sustainable than under previous management.

Although the share farming agreement proved good in the first few years, Ben feels that he needs to progress to a tenancy arrangement to take his business forward without the ties of a partner. Having farmed the land for four years Ben has ironed out the teething problems and the Land Trust are confident that they have a reliable tenant who will look after the farm and deliver their objectives. A tenancy looks like a natural progression in this situation.

I didn't find much interest in share farming agreements amongst either landlords or potential new entrants. Many have heard of the agreements that have gone wrong and it seems as if the ones that work rely on an honest relationship with common objectives and goals between partners. I am impressed that the Soil Association have such a flexible and common sense approach to making a success of their farm.

2e (viii) Land Partnership - using land to unlock innovation

Land partnerships are mechanisms that allow owners and entrepreneurs to combine resources to create new land enterprises. They provide the owner with new ways to offer opportunities for rural business, and new entrants the chance to apply and develop their business skills without the prohibitive cost of land purchase.

Land partnerships can help owners make the most of their capital assets, diversify income streams and spread financial risks. They can also help to encourage and support new business talent. These partnerships are now often used for rural craft businesses but not often seen in farming. Ben's farm is the only farming example I can think off.

In January 2011 Dartington Hall Trust and Land Share hosted a seminar on Land Partnerships at Dartington Hall. This drew together expertise and experience from around the country, including farmers, landowners, policy makers, lawyers, and people involved with engaging the wider community in the food chain.

The seminar concluded with a clear plan of action, and as a result a group of key organisations, including the National Trust, KEO Films, Fresh Start, Oxfam's UK Poverty Programme, Dartington Hall Trust, Northmoor Trust, and Blake Lapthorn Solicitors was formed. This team is now working on the first practical outcome – a Land Partnerships Handbook. The handbook is designed to map out a framework within which land partners can develop arrangements that suit their own goals and circumstances.

This approach is refreshing amongst landowners and agents when many seem to be only interested in getting the most money out of the tenant. A successful estate needs successful tenants and working together for common aims is more likely to achieve this.

2e (ix) 'Nothing has ever happened that could not be turned to advantage' and 'It's not easy to acquire a farm and by the time you get there you are too old and knackered to enjoy it.'

The oldest new entrant I talked to wishes to remain anonymous. I don't understand why because I think he and his wife have worked hard and should be proud of what they have achieved. They applied for numerous County Council tenancies but, after no success, the lack of considerable capital and no livestock meant they decided to take a different route. By buying a rural terraced house with a large garden that needed considerable work, and then re-selling, they built up some capital to buy some land. Competition in the area for grassland meant that they then looked further afield to expand. At the age of 60 they managed to buy an agriculturally tied house with 50 acres. By working hard a sound business has been built around sheep and niche organic products. 14 years later the farmer and his wife are tired, they want the business to keep going and can't afford to retire unless the farm is sold. With three children, one has finally decided to

come back and help out. But where do he and his partner live? The houses prices locally are too high for them to purchase and the type of business requires someone on site. Hopefully they may get some sort of agriculturally tied accommodation, but this is not a certainty.

This farmer's tale is one of struggle and sacrifice, it is a unique story but not unusual. Many new entrants have tales of babies sat in milking parlours, teenagers who are required to work and days when they don't know how the bills will be paid.

His best advice for new entrants is to have a suitable partner who does not insist on the finer things in life from day one, who is able to cope with sudden changes in prospect and help do something about them, and at all times both of you need to work like a dog for no visible return. The other tip, recognise opportunities and go for them single-mindedly.

2e (x) Late starters, hobbyists or life-stylers?

I am still not decided whether the above can be classed as new entrants. Do they bring innovation to farming or do they turn the countryside into a play park? Devon was a county of small dairy and mixed farms but this has changed. Beautiful thatched farmhouses, perfect for renovation projects, are either sold on their own, or with a few acres attached and the rest of the land then sold to the neighbour. Rocketing land prices way above the agricultural value have contributed to lack of opportunity for many country people.

Having a successful career, earning lots of money first and then buying a farm is probably a good way of starting farming. Twenty years of working in often high pressured industries equips these new farmers with many skills that are sometimes lacking in traditional farmers. They are computer literate, business focussed and social media savvy. They have a wide circle of contacts to sell their products to and have strong opinions on how the countryside should be run. The lack of practical skills doesn't seem to deter, but in quite a few cases I have seen the perfect farming system fall apart, then the farm downsized and put out to grass lets.

Debbie Kingsley of South Yeo Farm West was London born and bred. Renting a farm cottage after leaving university she and her husband spent their spare time helping on the main farm. Six years later they managed to buy a small holding, and finally in 2005 they purchased 108 acres in West Devon. For the last three years her husband has worked full time on the farm and Debbie continues to work full-time as a freelance arts consultant and trainer. The 108 acres is all in a Higher Level Scheme, and 25 courses for small-holders and farmers are run per year. There are 50 pedigree sheep, 3 pigs, and rare breed poultry and hatching eggs are sold. The rest of the farm is let out on seasonal lets but the plan is to take some of this land back and start a suckler herd. The courses were started as a result of their own experience of not being able to find anything suitable when they started. The courses are carefully planned and seem to deliver what the customer requires. Up until now applicants with a holding number could obtain RDPE funding for training, and this has helped to increase the number of clients.

Debbie says she doesn't know where to place herself, having been involved in some way in farming for 25 years but she remains very conscious of not having grown up on a farm. Is theirs a hobby farm or is it commercial? Her business planning is careful and although on a small scale, it is market focussed, delivering a product to a customer who wants it, is going forward and not stagnating. So to my mind it is a successful farm that many 'traditional' farmers would be wise to take note of.

2e (xi) Brain drain

Harper Adams is still looking for the figures on how many graduates who studied agriculture actually work in practical farming, but no doubt about it, the Harper graduate is very employable and the college comes top of the league tables for %age of students in employment 6 months after graduating.

Linda and Brian Taylor (HND AMBA and HND Agric respectively) left Harper in 1990. Brian spent 10 years working for a large estate driving very expensive machinery for long hours. Before she had three daughters Linda worked in the an-

imal feed industry. By saving hard they bought a house to renovate with a few acres attached, and subsequently they have added to their land and now have 6 acres where they have a few pigs, horses, chickens and ducks as well as selling hay. Brian now runs his external business; with a tractor and a digger he builds anything from patios to horse ménage rings and also maintains super-market car park gardens. Linda continues to run a very busy child minding business that she started when her children were little. Although still aware of what is happening in the agricultural world they are not directly involved. They are using their skills to deliver a service that gives them a good standard of living for their happy family.

So is this a loss to farming, is this the brain drain that many other industries are working hard to stop, should we be worried? I think so and it's time that the farming industry woke up to it. DEFRA tells us we need 6,000 new entrants a year for the next 10 years. Statistics indicate only between 50% and 70% of the recruits needed are coming out of higher education (*A Spedding 2009*) so not only do we need to attract more young blood, but we need to keep the talented skilled people who are already trained.

The oldest Taylor is now 16 and is starting at Reaseheath this year. She has been bought up in a great setting with a strong work ethic and has an interest in agriculture. Maybe she will make it her career.

2e (xii) County Council farms

The Smallholdings Act 1892 allowed authorities to acquire land for provision of smallholdings to 'reduce city drift'. This was followed by the Smallholdings and Allotments Acts 1907 & 1908 which gave power of compulsory purchase of land to meet demand and was wholly controlled and funded by central government.

The Dig for Victory campaign resulted in the Land Settlement (facilities) Act 1919 to manage the resettlement of servicemen returning from WW1. In 1926 the system was found to be too expensive and the responsibility for management was transferred to the local authorities. The Agriculture Act in 1970 – section 29 - states that local

authorities shall make it their general aim to provide opportunities for persons to be farmers on their own account by letting holdings to them while also having regard to the general interests of agriculture and of good estate management.

Under section 59 of the Agriculture Act 1970, the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (now the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) is required to present an annual report to Parliament summarising for each financial year his proceedings and those of local authorities in relation to smallholdings in England. This continues the similar obligations imposed on the Minister of Agriculture by the Agriculture Act 1947.

The 59th report (published 2011) gives us the statistics for 2009 when there were 2,907 tenanted holdings of which 39% were less than 20ha, 31% are 20-40 ha and 30% over 40 ha. Since 1966 total number of holdings has fallen from 12,882 to 2,907 and the average size has grown from 11.9ha to 30.1ha.

These figures don't take into account the recent sales of some of Somerset Council's farms and the planned sell off of a portion of the Gloucestershire estate. On 22 March 2011 the farming minister Lord Henley was asked in the House of Lords if he was 'alarmed' by the rising sales of farm tenancies by local authorities, which were 'depriving new entrants coming into the farming industry'. The minister agreed there had been 'considerable sales' but said he 'was not alarmed'. It was 'entirely a matter for local authorities and central government does not have any power to intervene'. He went on to add that more private sector tenancies would provide more opportunities for new entrants. The TFA (Tenant Farmers Association) disagrees, they believe that the County Council smallholding estate should be seen as a national rather than local asset and a more coordinated approach should be taken to its management and future. George Dunn, TFA chief executive, goes as far as describing himself as turning into a bore on the subject. He maintains if the policy of selling off forests was so unacceptable to the public then so should the selling of county farms be. As one of the very few opportunities for new entrants the TFA is putting its weight behind trying to preserve them.

So how *are* these County Council holdings going to be preserved? We ourselves have been tenants of Devon County Council since 2005. We have seen the estate reduced in number with vacant high maintenance farms sold and land added to make smaller farms larger. When we first signed our tenancy Dan Meek was assistant land agent, and he now heads the team ably assisted by Claire Sampson. Although I am sure when our time comes to move on Dan and I will have our disagreements over hedges and muddy gateways as most tenants do, I have always been impressed by his commitment to see the tenants succeed and progress, and to maintain the opportunity for future new entrants.

In 2010 a major review of policy was completed and now Devon CC lets a starter farm for an initial 7 year FBT (it was previously 5 years) and this can be extended to a second 7 year term if the tenant is achieving targets previously agreed on monitoring visits. Larger progression farms are let on longer tenancies and there is an opportunity to invest in the holdings and have a negotiated extension up to a total time on the estate of 25 years.

In 2009 the Association of Estate Surveyors (ACES) set out the benefits of county farms in the following rationale:

WORKING FOR AGRICULTURE

- ❖ A means of entry into farming for those who may not otherwise have the opportunity to farm on their own account.
- ❖ The potential for tenants to establish and develop viable business enterprises, enabling internal progression to larger council farms and advancement from the Estate to bigger holdings on privately or institutionally owned let estates.
- ❖ A means of supporting the tenanted sector, boosted by the flexibility of opportunities offered by agricultural tenure legislation.
- ❖ A tangible means of meeting the aspirations of the young farming community and agricultural industry.

WORKING FOR THE RURAL ECONOMY

- ❖ A valuable source of rural employment opportunities on small family farms, often in remote locations.
- ❖ An opportunity to contribute to the wider economic wellbeing and development of the countryside, including
- ❖ local food products for local markets.

WORKING FOR THE WIDER COMMUNITY

- ❖ A direct stake in the countryside for councils enables links to be made between the local farming industry, the rural economy and the wider community through school visits, open days and guided walks.

WORKING FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

- ❖ An opportunity to implement best practice in rural estate and sustainable countryside management and stewardship: e.g. Environmental Stewardship Schemes, Health & Safety and community participation.
- ❖ A wealth of traditional landscape features such as stone walls, ditches, hedgerows and farm buildings which are more likely to be retained on small family farms.
- ❖ The opportunity for the implementation of positive strategies that address the challenges of climate change, such as
- ❖ wind farms, anaerobic digestion plants and other renewable energy sources.

WORKING FOR THE COUNCIL

- ❖ A “bank” of potentially surplus development land arising from positive property reviews and estate rationalisations,
- ❖ providing a valuable source of capital for essential estate reinvestment, which assists rural economic regeneration and also provides finance for the provision of other council services.

- ❖ A potential land bank source of exception sites for affordable housing projects in rural areas

By following these objectives the future of the Devon Farms Estate although not guaranteed looks more secure.

Dan and Claire put much effort into getting the right tenant. They are involved with Fresh Start and work with Bicton College on a farm business competition for students to put together a business plan for a council farm. In the past few years the standard of business plans submitted and the quality of new entrants has been much improved.

The initial letting involves working with short listed candidates to get the best out of them at interview and to help them put together realistic and professional business plans.

After gaining the tenancy monitoring visits are constructive and aimed at getting the best from the tenant.

A successful estate relies on successful tenants and this includes the progression on to the next steps. Encouragement is given to look at other possible opportunities. In the past few years three Devon tenants have progressed so the policy seems to be working.

Dan maintains that having a vigorous selection process and high expectations of his tenants means that other landlords should be coming to him for proven tenants who are ready for progression. Although not happening in a formal way, council tenants are beginning to be seen as exceptional operators and low risk.

2e (xiii) Fresh Start

Fresh Start, is an organisation launched in December 2004 by Sir Donald Curry and aims to secure future for farming in England by a whole raft

of measures. To make life easier these are listed below:

- ❖ Promoting an entrepreneurial culture amongst the next generation of farm business owners
- ❖ Promoting the use of generic business planning and management techniques.
- ❖ Promotion of farming as an attractive career option for new entrants.
- ❖ Development of a 'matching service' that will link potential new entrants to those wishing to reduce their involvement or wishing to retire.
- ❖ Development of a national mentor capability for all new/growing farm enterprises.
- ❖ Practical support for a continued professional development culture to be adopted by everybody working in the industry.

A year after the initiative was launched the concept of Fresh Start Academies was launched. These Academies run across the country and typically involve training in business skills, mentoring and then identifying opportunities through a match-making network.

To date around 30 Academies have been running at different times and a number of graduates have managed to secure tenancies. But all these academies are run on a shoestring with some areas managing to secure some funding from local sources and most of the professional time being given for free. These professionals include land agents, solicitors, accountants, consultants and land managers.

Currently the national funding for Fresh Start has finished and although there may be a little for specialised academies the work will now come to an end.

Sir Don Curry and Sir Dennis Chamberlain both continue to champion new entrants. At Farming Ladder seminar on 31st March 2011 Sir Don Curry called for more landowners to take risks, promising that the risks would be worth it with innovation and success being the prize. He also continues to call for the retention of county estates and warns that, to support the first step, the next steps and opportunities on the farming ladder must be found.

Lessons learned in the UK

- ❖ There's lots of people wanting to farm, although many of them are lacking the skills required.
- ❖ New entrants are running amazing innovative businesses against the odds.
- ❖ New entrants are focussed on what the customer wants and using a huge varieties of skills to deliver it.
- ❖ Training is available and new entrants are using the opportunities to gain skills in food manufacturing and a wide range of business disciplines.
- ❖ The farming ladder starts with very small steps.
- ❖ The opportunities are limited and only exceptional operators do progress.
- ❖ Tenancy sector still seems the main route to farming for a new entrant.
- ❖ New entrants are short of time capital and opportunity.
- ❖ A strong team, could be wife or husband or a wider network, is essential to keep the new entrant sane.
- ❖ Any help is always appreciated, especially if it is practical.
- ❖ New entrants have got some very high profile supporters, who want to see things change.
- ❖ Landowners are starting to recognise the need for a change.
- ❖ Share farming is an opportunity but it must be based on trust and common goals.
- ❖ Nobody gets anything for nothing, successful new entrants work very hard.

2f. Brussels and the EU

Looking at EU facts and figures confirmed that most of Europe has the same lack of new entrants as does the UK. However most of the member states were accessing CAP funding similar to France to try and give help to new entrants.

Training and innovation is to drive the next round of CAP funding. It seems likely that money will be

available to encourage skilled new entrants. I came home from Brussels thinking that it was about time England made an effort to access some of this funding. As CAP becomes more dominated by environmental issues new entrants who are prepared to be open minded about different farming methods to fit these new objectives will have a chance to succeed.

3. Conclusions and Recommendations.

Ideally this is where I list all the recommendations to cure the lack of new entrants in farming, but sorry to all those of you that had such faith in me, I have very few answers and lots of questions. I like to think of it as work in progress. I feel that I have done a proper job if it starts any sort of debate amongst the great and the good as well as inspire one of two of the great young people who are hesitating about giving farming a chance. Farming is not just about making a profit and my travels have reassured me that most of us farm for a range of reasons. The ownership and working of land often goes far deeper than just a career and I pay tribute to all the amazing and resilient farmers I have met on my travels.

It is without doubt difficult to start in farming if you have not had the benefit of a family farm. It is expensive and getting more so, and it is becoming increasingly difficult to borrow the money required and that is if you find a farm to rent. In the first place tenancies are short and high risk plus competition from established farmers is high. Hard work and little monetary reward should mean that it holds little attraction for the bright and young, but I have seen many exceptional new entrants who have overcome huge obstacles to be able to farm and are loving it. They are committed, innovative and customer focussed, all qualities that are needed in the modern farmer. They are farming dreadful land, paying high rents and having to pay back huge borrowings. They don't get much help, but most are not bitter and are not planning on giving up.

Our own farming story is not unique, but it illustrates the highs and lows of a first generation farmer. We have been good tenants, meeting our objectives and always paying our rent. On a short term FBT we farm with more risk than an owner occupier, succession or agricultural holdings tenant. Our first farm was put in a perilous position by the change in a landowner's business direction.

Being offered the opportunity of a County Council farm was a lucky break for us.

For Higher Fingle Farm to be a successful Council starter farm we now need to progress to allow the next young farmer a chance. This step on the farming ladder at times feels like a harder step than the first few. It has all the same risks with an increase in borrowings to stock extra acres, but also has bigger emotional impact now the children are happily settled in school and enjoy living in Devon. The debate about new entrants and the next generation of farmers has got to address not just opportunities for starting farming but also the progression through the industry to a successful retirement. Older farmers wanting to retire are not being able to, mainly due to high rural house prices and strict planning rules. Matching up some enthusiastic new farmers with experienced established operators should be an easy solution, but the culture of no cooperation that runs throughout British farming seems to be preventing a framework of these solutions from moving forward. Tax incentives and monetary reward similar to a system available in France would certainly have results, but in the current economic climate we are unlikely to get yet another costly subsidy. In my humble opinion we don't need any help, farming as an industry is quite capable of working together to come up with a successful template.

A lack of new entrants is not a new thing, but I feel that farming has got to a crisis point and the industry needs to engage and encourage these exceptional people. This would help regain a national sense of pride and innovation that seems to have been lost in the past few years of over regulation and subsidy dependency.

My rant

I am a little tired of being told that new entrants have it easy and just whine. I am also tired of hearing how impossible it is to go farming. I am disappointed at the way practical skills seem to have been replaced by a need to be computer literate to be good at anything, and how the lack of financial reward is deterring people from an industry that gives me much pleasure.

These recommendations are a platform for further discussion, collaboration and action, so what are you waiting for ...

The Farming Industry

1. Not encouraging new entrants will risk leaving the industry stagnated and lacking innovation.
2. Leadership and cooperation is needed with a strategy to provide quality opportunities to encourage new entrants and their successful progression on the farming ladder.
3. A successful exit at retirement for established farmers is essential to create opportunities at all stages on that farming ladder.
4. Farming needs all the new entrants it can get. Stop ignoring 50% of the potential workforce and address the lack of women in the industry.
5. Quality role models of the non celebrity kind are needed to show that farming is a rewarding and possible career choice for graduates and apprentices, both male and female.
6. Agricultural education needs to refocus on agriculture, with practical skills and science topping the agenda. It is extremely disappointing to see how lowly ranked the level of practical skills has become. Business planning is a necessary tool for a farmer, but practical skills are essential.
7. Mentoring and help for the new entrant should be extended. First generation farmers could do with some positive encouragement. This includes the practical help taken for granted on established family farms. Why wait for a crisis when a more cooperative approach would mean that the new entrant would make a success of his/her farming venture?
8. Lobby for Pillar II funding for new entrants to match what is found in much of Europe.
9. The value of the county farms estates needs to be promoted at both national and local levels. Although not perfect it is one of the few dedicated opportunities to get a start in farming.

Landowners, landlords and land agents.

1. There needs to be a more flexible approach to land use. Identify the operator then work together to find the most successful structure of partnership, be it a tenancy or other arrangement.
2. Risk. It's time for a re-evaluation of the risks associated with new entrants. Patronage of the right new entrant will reap long term rewards.
3. Think of the social contribution of letting a farm to a younger tenant. Younger tenants will bring life blood to the rural community, children to the local schools and innovation to the countryside. It is where you ,the landowner, who can make a positive contribution.
4. Council tenants are proven tenants. An extension of tenant competitions and mentoring will hopefully prove to private landlords that they need to cherry pick the best tenants for progression.
5. Quality opportunities will result in quality tenants.

6. Small farms are viable, forget the 250-acre myth and be open to innovation.
7. CSAs and other alternative enterprises are credible funding sources which can have a positive impact on cash flows as well as deliver other social outcomes.
8. A central up to date database of opportunities available would result in a greater pool of applicants. Although many tenancies are advertised in the national farming press, there is currently nowhere to find the more alternative opportunities that could suit the new entrant.

New Entrants

1. Risks are high but the UK Welfare State means you are unlikely to starve.
2. To be successful applying for a tenancy or business opportunity you really need to be the best. Competition is high and you need to focus on how a potential landlord will see you and your ability. Market yourself!
3. Practical skills are essential. You are unlikely to survive by just being good at business plans and social media. Look out for free or subsidised courses to gain qualifications you may need and look at some basic food skills courses to give you an extra edge.
4. Business planning skills are not optional. Take up the offer of any courses and get plenty of advice, but at the end of the day it's your plan so you need to write it.
5. First rung of the mythical ladder is not the tenancy. Start a small business even in the back garden but keep detailed accounts and figures that you can use in the future.
6. Be mobile, opportunities are never on your doorstep and they certainly won't come to you. Networking and contacting land agents to let them know that you are out there is a good start.
7. Land agents have different objectives they need to deliver, find what they are and see how you can match them. Farming is not just about profit (although you will need to make some) and the highest rents. Sometimes a new entrant can deliver environmental and social objectives that an established farmer will struggle to achieve.
8. Demonstrate that you have a good support network, be it your wife, family or mentor. Landlords are frightened by anything they perceive as risk. Most first generation farmers will tell you that things can get tough and a support network is essential to survival and sanity.
9. Nobody is going to give you anything, so stop waiting for the perfect acreage and large tractor. Some of the best businesses are started on the most unlikely pieces of land.
10. An easy life is not optional, but if you like a challenge

4. What now for us?

I didn't need the Nuffield Scholarship to make me realise that I have a fantastic happy family and life. I didn't want to change our life, but I did want to find the future direction for us as small farms become increasingly difficult to make a full time living from. I have lots of ideas, but have not so far found the next step on the farming ladder, but I am certain we will. I have certainly learnt things to help us, not least the need for a tidy farm-yard!

I have talked with the Farmers Weekly about some of the themes in my report, especially about increasing one's success when applying

for a tenancy. Similarly a south west regional paper with a farming section is running a whole feature on women in farming and I have done some work with them.

Experiencing the harshness and poverty most people live with and seeing the inequality of both women and children in many societies touched me deeply. I would hope that when the children grow up I will be able to spend some time using my skills to try and improve a few of these lives.

My children continue to be my inspiration. Nevil and I will be immensely proud if they do choose to farm.

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This Report Is dedicated to:

Jean Ayres

My mum, who was so proud that I was awarded the scholarship but never saw how much fun I have had. My mum, who continues to be my inspiration to live each day without regret and believe anything is possible.

Thank You to

- ❖ Nevil my friend, husband and biggest fan for encouraging me to go and have my adventure.
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- ❖ All the people who have been patient with my questions and allowed me to learn so much about their lives and businesses
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Nevil with Elsa, Alfred, Dora, Percy and Harold