



# **A Nuffield Farming Scholarships Trust Report**

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## **Influencing policy & regulation**

**Sue Evans**

**July 2018**

**NUFFIELD  
UK**

I've written this report to be read by farmers and policy makers in government. My goal is to inspire farmers to believe that they can influence policy and regulation and to have the confidence to go out and do so. I hope policy makers will find it useful in approaching farmer engagement and changing their approaches in order to communicate with more farmers many of whom have the answers to delivering better solutions. There is also a third group who I was surprised to find myself engaging with as a vital third element to influencing policy. That is the academics. So here is hoping that this document may also inspire some academics and their institutions to work closer with farmers in producing solutions and evidence which can be applied in practice. It was never my intention to produce an academic paper but rather to produce an easy to read if potentially controversial and challenging look at how to approach policy making.

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# A Nuffield (UK) Farming Scholarships Trust Report



Date of report: July 2018

*"Leading positive change in agriculture.  
Inspiring passion and potential in people."*

Title Influencing policy and regulation

Scholar Sue Evans

Sponsor John Oldacre Foundation

Objectives of Study To provide farmers with confidence to believe that they can influence policy and then go ahead and do so

Tour To provide Welsh Government with alternative approaches on how to produce policy and regulation which is better informed from the ground  
And my third unexpected objective to inspire a closer working relationship with academics

Countries Visited Brazil, Switzerland, England, Wales, India, Scotland, Ireland, Netherlands

Messages

- If farmers don't present solutions to Government others will.
- Individual farmers can and do influence policy and regulation all over the world.
- Good regulation makes it easier for people to do the right thing.
- Government, academia and farmers speak a different language making communication for the purpose of creating policy and regulation difficult between these groups.
- Government and the farming sector need to work together to improve the flow of information from the farming sector to inform policy writing from its inception.
- A willingness to change policy creation and consultation process is needed by everyone involved to produce more effective policy and regulation.
- It is of paramount importance that farmers engage positively and proactively with the public, politicians and the government.
- More collaboration is essential.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Individual farmers can and sometimes do influence policy and regulation all over the world. If we as farmers and our supporting organisations do not present solutions, others will - as has happened in the Netherlands where the Phosphate Reduction Plan has imposed a forced reduction in livestock numbers on dairy farms.

Good regulation makes it easier for people to do the right thing. The best policy and regulation outcomes are produced when Government works closely with those on the ground who will be most affected by the regulation as well as taking into account academic research.

The realities and complexity of our farming systems and the effect they have on the surrounding countryside and nature means that farmers should not try and oversimplify the messages to government by presenting one solution: they should present more complex and location specific solutions which will require more adaptable policy and regulation.

There needs to be a recognition that different language is used by the different groups involved in policy making. There is often misunderstanding so this must be recognised by every group when communicating between farmers, government officials and academics.

A willingness to change is needed by everyone involved in discussions creating more effective policy and regulation. This means not just that farmers need to change but that government needs to engage with farmers in a different way and be willing to change its processes in engaging with those whose lives will be most affected by the altered policy and regulation. Academic institutions also need to change their approach and deliver science which can be applied on the ground.

It is therefore, of paramount importance that farmers engage with the public, politicians and the government in a positive and proactive way. We need to engage through charismatic leaders and great speakers from all walks of life who will support farmers. We must provide them with positive messages, innovative approaches and solutions so that from their positions of influence they are promoting the best policy and regulation to create a sustainable future for the next generation of farmers to come - just as William Morris still succeeds to influence change after his death through the legacy which he created with his Nuffield Trusts.

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## **DISCLAIMER**

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

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Nuffield Farming Scholars are available to speak to NFU Branches, Agricultural Discussion Groups and similar organisations

## Chapter 1: Personal Introduction

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I am a Welsh speaking farmer's daughter from Anglesey who spent as many hours as possible outside on the farm as a child where I developed many practical skills such as shearing, de-horning and gaining my 360 excavator operator's licence.

I did a degree in Rural Enterprise and Land Management at Harper Adams before going on to become a Chartered Surveyor working in estate management. I then left the UK for nearly 18 months travelling and doing practical farming jobs such as bulldozer operator and ringer in the Northern Territory, Australia on a station with 35,000 head of cattle.

Shortly after my return I set up my own company and trained as a Mediator with the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators. As well as continuing in estate management I worked in lobbying and then did a sabbatical for 2 years as Senior Adviser to the Natural Resources Management team in Welsh Government. I now work as Director Wales of the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust which is a research based charity undertaking science that provides workable solutions on the ground.

I am passionate about farming and the need for policy and regulation to be informed by the people working in the industry.

I am supported at home by Mark and our two young sons who are passionate about farming and the freedom living and working in the countryside brings.

Outside work I still enjoy farming and doing other activities such as running which all the family can take an active part in.



I feel very fortunate to have been awarded a Nuffield Scholarship made possible for me by my sponsor at the John Oldacre Foundation.

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## Chapter 2: Background to my study Why did I do this study

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I had attended numerous Nuffield meetings in Wales and was inspired by the conversation at each event. Then I met Jack England, a Nuffield Scholar from Australia at the Royal Welsh Show in 2016. We started a conversation about how farmers influence or don't influence policy. He said that in Australia the approach to influencing Government had changed and it inspired me to finally put a Nuffield application together. There is change afoot in Wales as well. With the looming post Brexit world ahead, there are great opportunities to do things differently. To my utter amazement I was invited to pursue my chosen subject and thus began two years of an extraordinary journey.

There is such an enormous quantity of regulation which farmers are faced with and it seems to be ever increasing. Welsh farming businesses feel they do not have the capacity to absorb the current regulation let alone consider taking time out to try and influence it. Yet when new regulation comes into force and it begins to affect farmers' lives in a negative way, they will turn activist and work tirelessly to make their voices heard. Another catalyst for my study was one case where a group of farmers were so incensed by proposed new policy on Basic Payment thresholds, they formed a group called Fairness for the Uplands and challenged the Wales Government in Court.

In my work I had come across regulation that needs simplifying or is difficult to comply with, sometimes unintended consequences arise from legislation which conflicted with another area, there are measures with only a short-term life, delivery methods are hard to follow, or not enough thought is given to whether a voluntary approach might serve better than a statutory one. All these seem to stem from policies which did not take account of what was actually happening on the ground. I wanted to find out why that was, to be able to communicate and inspire how to influence policy and regulation.

The greatest and final motivator to me to undertake this project was the outcome of Brexit referendum with the forced change that was on its way. I wanted to find out if anyone had any better ways of doing things around the world that could motivate farmers to provide information to government to influence the impending change and at the same time also to provide inspiration to government to try a different approach.

My particular interest is in the family farms of Wales and the environmental pressures and opportunities on the agricultural sector. I am committed to ensuring that farmers have a real voice in the policy and regulation that affects them.



*My inspiration –  
my father and my son. They are both  
great problem solvers as are many  
farmers but they are not great at  
communicating in writing*

*Photo: Author's Own*

## Chapter 3: My Study Tour

When	Country	Why I chose that country
2017		
March	Brazil	2017 CSC Scholarship Conference was held in Brazil and the additional trip to the Amazon was a golden opportunity to study environmental issues with farmers
September	Switzerland	Progressive country whose general public seem happy to financially support their farmers. I was invited to participate in a meeting of seven international professors looking at governance of agri environment.
November	Cardiff, Wales	Within Wales there were people that I wanted to meet. Dr Ludivine Petetin lectures in the Law department of Cardiff university specialising in international law. The Winter Fair is always a good place to meet farmers and others.
December	London	DEFRA meeting in Westminster
2018		
January	Aberystwyth, Wales	I was invited to speak at round table discussion at an Agri Academy event. This enabled me to share my Nuffield experiences and ask questions to the young and progressive farmers in Wales.
February	Chirk, Wales	I was invited to speak with and got the views of a group of Farmers Union of Wales farmers.
February	India	I was drawn to investigate how regulation had developed in this country which is very different to ours although it had been under British rule.
March	Westminster	I accompanied Dr Ludivine Petetin when she spoke about the effect of World Trade Organisation on Brexit at an All-Party Parliamentary Group Meeting.
April	Scotland	Scotland is perceived (in Wales) as a country which is progressive in its policy and regulation development. I wanted to interview people on the ground to find out if they believe they are able to influence the outcomes and if they like Scottish Government approach and delivery.
May	Cardiff	I was invited to speak at a two-day workshop at Cardiff University
May	Republic of Ireland	Again, like Scotland, the Welsh often look to the Irish for inspiration.
July	Netherlands	There is a growing issue of diffuse pollution from expanding dairy farms in Wales and I felt that I would gain insight from speaking with dairy farmers in Holland

## Chapter 4 Policy making and legislation

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Governance is a word which switches most people off from listening, yet it affects everything farmers do and influences many of their decisions. Governments have the carrot and stick levers to help achieve their goals and objectives. Good regulation – the stick – should make it easier for people to do the right thing.

But I found before and during my travels that there are many instances of poor legislation:

**a. Regulation needs simplifying.** When a red tape review was first carried out in Wales, I remember the appointed Chairman, who is a respected retired Marks and Spencer's executive, being shocked at the amount of regulation farmers were expected to be compliant with. He recognised the problem that farmers, as small businesses, many as sole traders, do not have Health and Safety, Human Resources, or other departments, unlike larger businesses, yet they are expected to know about, understand and comply with a vast raft of regulation on many matters.

Many farmers I speak with have got to the point of accepting that they will not be able to keep abreast of all the regulation that affects them. They have become almost punch-drunk, resulting in an attitude that they just won't bother to try and keep abreast of regulation. Many feel that the system is set up to defeat them and that they will be fined for something when inspected. They expect that an inspection will always result in some negative outcome regardless of how diligently they work to be compliant.

**b. Unintended consequences of legislation.** Policy and regulation often deliver unintended consequences and fail to deliver the best outcomes. When a problem is looked at in isolation, it can produce perverse and future problems: for example, the UK Government in the past incentivised the use of diesel cars which are now being blamed for creating different problems.

Due to the way that government departments, or divisions within departments, tend to work in silos, a problem may be solved in one government department without any consideration for creating problems elsewhere. As an example, there is a danger of this with issues such as slurry pollution from farms, a problem not only here in Wales but also in other countries such as New Zealand. In the Netherlands the introduction of new lower phosphate levels regulation in the Netherlands in 2018 has had a devastating effect in farmers: they were freed from dairy quotas in 2015 and so invested in larger production capacity but now three years later find themselves unable to use it unless they can pay for very expensive phosphate rights.

**c. Problems need a long-term solution.** If agriculture is causing political problems, then solutions will be sought to satisfy the electorate. In the current political climate demanding the short-term focus for instant solutions there is a danger that elements we know to be vital, for example, to the future of sustainable food security will be sacrificed to reach what is perceived to be a general consensus.

**d. Lack of effective consultation to reach sound outcomes.** Take one example: more than 100 farmers grouped together as Fairness for the Uplands to take Welsh Government to court in an appeal against a proposed reduced Common Agricultural Payments Basic Payments on land over 400 metres. Despite extensive negotiation with the farming unions and other stakeholders, the Government had not seen this challenge coming. The Farming Unions presented one voice at the stakeholder meetings which did not represent the views of this group of upland farmers. The Welsh Government were unaware that there was this difference between farmers' views. The government changed its position to accommodate this

action under pressure from this group. It created great division between farmers. The eventual outcome was considered by some as a knee jerk reaction and angered other elements of the farming industry.

**e. Legislation or voluntary schemes to achieve the needed outcome.** Practices in agriculture which are perceived to have a detrimental effect on wider society will lead to tougher policies and regulation. Instant knee jerk regulation may well not be the right answer.

**f. The need for better delivery methods.** The 2013 State of Nature Report had raised the question of how so much money spent on environmental benefit in previous years could produce such depressing outcomes. There was an appetite to try something different because continuing to do the same thing in the same way simply led to the same outcomes. I was employed on a two-year sabbatical with Welsh Government as Senior Adviser to the Natural Resource Management team to advise on the development, running and delivery of a new approach to delivering schemes to farmers in Wales amongst other things. However, instigating change in any organisation is not easy and the process with fraught with difficulty.



**Welsh family farms – what will they look like in the future?**

*Photo: Author's own*

## Chapter 5 How is policy made? Who informs Government?

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### 5.1 Introduction

By the time a consultation document is published a lot of the basic thinking and direction has been established. I wanted to find out how do farmers get their ideas into the mixing pot at the beginning of the process and influence the thinking and direction of what is to come.

The questions I asked during my tour which created the most thought-provoking responses and discussions were:

*Who informs the government when they draft their consultation documents and preparation for new policy and regulation?*

*Where do Government officials tasked with writing policy and regulation get their inspiration and ideas for what they put into their consultations?*

### 5.2 Farming Unions and farmer representative bodies

The first answer from most farmers from every country that I visited was that the farming unions were the ones that have initial conversations with government and influence those that write policy.

Most people I spoke to thought that the way farmers influence policy and regulation is through the farming unions. However, when specifically asked who provides the government with the information on which to base policy and regulation, most people asked did not know. When I dug deeper it seemed that most farmers concluded that farming unions around the world do not actually present evidence and write possible solutions but respond to threats to the farming industry.

Further, in every country I visited farmers felt that the farming unions are influenced by large farmers. Therefore, do farming unions represent the interests of all farmers? To be fair they can't, as many farmers' interests conflict and could not result in a single voice which the unions seek. This was the case with Fairness for the Uplands which caused a real rift and bitterness between farmers in Wales.

I was told by a deer farmer in Scotland that he felt that the farming unions were working against him as a pioneering new industry leader when he tried to lobby for what he believed was fairer treatment of the deer industry. He felt that they favoured the more traditional sheep and beef farmers.

Digging further, I asked should it be the farming unions that inform Government or is their role as a union merely to tell the government what is and is not acceptable once the ideas have been formulated? I was told by a senior farming unions officer that their role is to lobby the government to say when they are not happy with proposed policy and regulation, not to provide the Government with the answers. How many others think that way?

### 5.3 So who does provide the Government with the information to create the basis for consultation?

#### 5.3.1. Government

I asked policy writers where they start. I was told that generally the Minister and senior civil servants will give a direction and policy officers will search published data to seek solutions. In practice that means that academic papers and policy in other countries will be regular sources of information. Also, Non-Government Organisations are also very good at presenting documents as sources of information.



### 5.3.2 Academics

I had the great pleasure and privilege to be given the opportunity to work with academics from all over the world that met in Switzerland to discuss agri- environmental governance. My main impression was that they did not feel able to influence policy and regulation. One of the professors had a bad experience of having done so over a controversial issue which resulted in their being targeted for abuse in the press and from government.

From my non-academic viewpoint the academics that I met working within universities aspired to carry out work that would be perceived as being the most influential and impress their peers. I learnt that, because of the way that academic systems are set up, there is little room for collaboration or working to produce and deliver positive outcomes on the ground. In fact, I got the impression that when academics are seen to engage with the wider population in any way, they lose credibility with their peers.

Many academics that I spoke with would like to work more collaboratively and produce outcomes from their work which could be applied on the ground. However, it seems that under the current academic funding system, funds are rarely available for such work and costs of working without support are prohibitive.

From the academic view of the farming sector, there was much talk of the need for farmers to increase their learning. Associate Professor Steven Wolf, from the USA whom I met in Switzerland, wrote a paper on the professionalization of farmers. I believe that we should never stop learning so cannot disagree with these sentiments, however, conversely there is much to be learned from farmers.



**Academics visit to progressive farming enterprise in Switzerland while working together on world governance of agri environment**

*Photo: Author's own*

### 5.3.3 Non-Government Organisations (NGOs)

Non-Governmental Organisations tend to be thought of as organisations that represent environmental and biodiversity causes and do not represent farmers interests. They are therefore perceived as mainly conflicting with farmers. However, they provide information which government take on board in writing

policy. Governments mainly seek evidence-based information: they seem to consider evidence as anything written in a report. But farmers don't write reports, therefore anecdotal evidence from generations of farming family practices and observations is rarely captured in reports and is therefore not considered as evidence. It is rarely documented.

This opposing interest of NGOs is not always the case. In the tribal areas around Kotturu north of Srikakulam in India I discovered that most of the NGOs that I met with did represent farmers' interests. Many had been given government funding to work in rural areas after flooding disasters in the 1980's. One particular NGO officer, Prakash Ramachanderan, was the reason I went to India. His passion for producing solutions working with farmers and to alleviate community hardship was boundless. Now in his seventies I get the impression that he is widely respected by government and leading authorities and the tribal farmers. He has produced life changing benefits to the tribes in three different areas in which he has led collaborative work. His energy and charisma seem boundless and it is directed at helping Indian farming communities. His was not the only NGO working on behalf of farmers. There seemed to be many helping farmers to set up co-operatives and to market their produce.

### 5.3.4 Farmers

When I ask individual farmers in Wales if they believe they can influence policy many reply a flat no. This is consistent with wider population who do not believe that they have any influence on the politics of our country to the extent that many people don't vote. In this same vein a large proportion of farmers do not believe that they can possibly influence policy.

There were, however, some farmers and individuals on my travels who did believe that they could influence policy and regulation. Their personality, charisma and self-belief played a great role in that but in numerous cases they had been empowered by training following an opportunity given to them to take part in schemes such as AgriAcademy, a Welsh Government sponsored personal development programme, or had taken on roles as leaders of groups such as the women's farmers group in India.

At one end of the farming spectrum, a pioneering farmer I spoke with in Switzerland had not considered influencing policy and regulation: he focused entirely on finding ways around the currently inflexible system. He was pioneering in his approach, finding a solution through a piece of legislation that was not created with his collaborative approach to business in mind. It seemed that many farmers' approach to regulation is to find a way around whatever regulation is obstructing their farming business and to maximise the opportunities presented by any new regulation.

Others feel that their best chance to influence policy and regulation is through organisations either by being a member of a group and taking an active role, or by being a leader in a community and leading new ideas with pilot projects to demonstrate to government's better ways of operating. In the Arunachal Pradesh region of India, following extreme flooding in the 1980's, chiefs of villages in the tribal areas would represent their communities in negotiating with those delivering aid. Other new leaders stepped forward and began to help put innovative new programs together in the communities to make them more sustainable and less at risk of flooding in future.

Views can change. Three progressive farmers in Wales that I spoke with at the 2017 Winter Fair all said that they do believe they can influence policy and regulation but that they have only recently developed the confidence to put themselves forward to do so. None of the three farmers, who are all in their 40's, had been to college or university. They admitted that they had very little confidence in their earlier years but through Welsh Government funded schemes, such as Hybu Cig Cymru's scholarship, they had developed their confidence. One of them had a conversation with the newly appointed Minister for

Environment at the Winter Fair and spoke confidently about his focus of farmers designing, developing and delivering their own programmes of work to fulfil Welsh Government policy objectives. It resulted in the Minister agreeing to visit his farm.

Conversely, other farmers I spoke with were thinking of withdrawing from meetings where they believe that their involvement is merely part of a tick box exercise by government or NGOs so they can say that they have consulted with farmers/community but, in fact, the farmers find that no one is actually listening to/acting on what they say. They reported notes of meetings misrepresenting what farmers said and no positive action resulting from those meetings. This was particularly the case with the Scottish farmers and crofters that I met who felt undermined by the approach taken in the recent reintroduction of sea eagles.



**Isle of Skye crofts, Scotland. -a habitat for sea eagles?** Photo: Author's own:

Case study: In Scotland the crofters seemed to have more political sway with the public who do not want to pick on the small and poor crofter. However, on the subject of the reintroduction of sea eagles, crofters and the rural community felt that there was a tick box approach by the NGOs and the authorities who seem to take no notice of the local communities' real needs. The consultation with crofters and local community seemed to be overridden by a political agenda to avoid any link between the cost of compensating crofters for actual loss of livestock resulting from the re-introduction of sea eagles. Authorities refuse to make compensation payments as that would demonstrate a cost of having sea eagles, as opposed to the actual payments made for what they term management costs for accommodating sea eagles. This resulted in the same amount being paid to each crofter regardless of whether they lost 2 or 20 lambs in a season. This has caused great anger in the area.

In the Netherlands, the dairy farmers I visited felt defeated over the way phosphate regulations have been introduced imposing a compulsory decrease in livestock numbers. Some had been affected far worse than others and this was perceived by farmers as being completely unjust. They all had ideas on how they would rather have seen the industry regulated and all agreed it should not have been done in the way that it was.



In the Amazon farmers seemed to fall into two camps. The larger farmers felt persecuted by what they saw as greatly onerous requirement to return 80% of their land to natural regeneration of rainforest while the small farmers seemed to fall beneath the radar and paid no heed to any regulation.



**The Amazon: small farmers under the regulatory radar?**

*Photo: Author's own*

My findings talking to farmers everywhere, however, are that everyone adversely affected by a new regulation wants to engage where there was previously no interest shown in the creation process of that regulation.

### 5.3.5 Other advocates

Farmers in general seem to be moving towards others to take their ideas forward. By far the most effective way that I saw farmers ideas being taken forward was through the work of those one step removed from the industry. This was particularly the case in Republic of Ireland where I met three individuals who had been bought up on farms and where now leading lights in influencing government and their policy at home and overseas.

There are a lot of farmers' kids, siblings and partners working in positions of influence and we mustn't underestimate their value to the industry and role in influencing government. Aisling Mehan, a farmer's daughter, Nuffield Scholar who trained as a lawyer and set up her own firm provided solutions to government with wording for better tax regulation. Dr Brendan Dunford, a farmer's son who did a PhD on the Burren, represents farmers' interests and has influenced the government resulting in additional income for famers. Then Noel Kiernan introduced himself as a wildlife reserve manager, which he does managing his own farm for the benefit of wildlife, inviting people from far and wide to see what he has achieved. They all have an in depth understanding of agriculture and great passion for a thriving rural community.



**The Burren, Ireland  
with its own local advocates**

*Photo: Author's own*

Yet more possible advocates are emerging. Parts of the supply chain, such as processors and farmers' customers such as ARLA, M&S, Waitrose and others, are also in a position to influence policy makers. Indeed, numerous farmers that I spoke with were turning to their customers and processors to take their messages to government. The way suppliers and customers behave and the policies they have in place are also a significant influence on the farming business. Further, policies such as incentives put in place by supermarkets are watched by government with a view to ensuring that the best ideas are extended on a wider basis.

### 5.3.6 The Public

I was told that Governments sometimes do not work to deliver best outcomes from policy but to deliver on a political agenda. That being the case then public opinion of farmers and farming has a significant influence on governments' approach.

The world seems keen for change. To continue to do the same thing resulting in the same outcomes doesn't seem to be an option any more. We cannot tell the public what they should want or frighten them into believing that change is bad. I believe this is evident in the outcome of the Brexit vote and Donald Trump's election victory in the USA. Even the way that we communicate has changed and the language used is different.

We hear so much reported in the press from minority groups hitting out at the way farmers rear their livestock or grow their crops and yet it seems to me that the farming sector, its rural social and cultural heritage along with its ways of working and living is itself becoming the most neglected minority group. There is very little appetite amongst urban dwellers to hear and understand why things are done in a certain way in rural areas. At worst it seems as if there is a wish to stop any activities by indigenous rural dwellers, including the social and cultural heritage of Wales, by an urban majority led by minority extremists who cite morals and ethics over science and evidence.

In Switzerland there is a great deal of public support for farmers. On the other hand, farmers in the Netherlands feel marginalised and unsupported by their government. In Scotland I got a similar impression that there was little notice paid to farmers by the government. In both cases it seemed the interest of the public in farming was at best indifferent compared with Switzerland where there was real support for farming.

## 5.4 Consultations

The most obvious way for anyone as an individual to influence policy and regulation is through responding to consultation documents. A consultation paper is prepared by government officials and then everyone is invited to comment on that consultation paper. But as I have shown above the basic approach to new policy and regulation has already been prepared in a consultation and even then farmers as individuals rarely respond to consultations.

The farmers and people whom I asked if they would ever respond to a consultation said they felt that they would need to spend days reading papers and answering questions. The consultation process is not well understood. As the purpose of a consultation is to get the opinion of people who have an interest in that subject, I suggested to individuals that they could and should respond, if only to one question. They were surprised that they could respond in such a brief manner and some, particularly those with a strong view or expertise in certain areas, thought they might in future.

In Wales I find that there is generally a willingness amongst those working within government creating policy and regulation to listen to those on the ground who will be affected but there is such disconnect and lack of access to those people that it is difficult for them to engage in a positive way.

When speaking to professors /academics from abroad, they see Wales as well respected and progressive in its agri-environment schemes and other regulations such as the Well-being of Future Generations Act. However, within Wales, while Welsh farmers are being told that they should change their approach, farmers don't believe that there is any sign that government are willing to change their approach. If you keep doing the same thing in the same way you will keep getting the same outcomes. It seems to me that Welsh Government have processes which they believe are tried and tested and they seem reluctant to divert from those.

### Summary

Public perception and demands on politicians have a direct effect on policy and regulation relevant to farmers.

It is perceived to be harder for small farmers [with](#) limited resources to influence policy and regulation. However, a social conscience results in more public support for helping small and subsistence farmers particularly demonstrated with crofters in Scotland and size limited farmers in Switzerland.

Charismatic leaders, great speakers and individuals in positions to influence who support the farmers can produce great outcomes in influencing positive policy and regulation.

There is a need to remove silos in order to work in a multi-disciplinary way across divisions which is currently frowned upon in academic world and rarely happens within government.

The realities and complexity of sustainable natural resources and the farming industry that works with them mean that we should not try and oversimplify by presenting one solution but look towards more complex and location specific solutions which will require more adaptable policy and regulation.





**Regional Research Station in Andhra Pradesh, India where there is much valued information exchange between farmers and government.**

*Photo: Author's own*

## Chapter 6 Aspects to take into account in policy and regulation

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Better informed and effective policy making needs firm evidence to build on. It requires taking views of many stakeholders into account and a range of ways to consult, change or support practices and make progress. This chapter covers the many considerations I came across.

### 6.1 Farming concerns

Practices in agriculture which are perceived to have a detrimental effect on wider society will lead to tougher policies and regulation. It may be that there are loopholes in regulation which allow or even promote certain bad practices but if exploited they will come back to bite the industry. There are always going to be individuals in any walk of life who act irresponsibly and selfishly. Their behaviour in agriculture is picked up and used to beat the industry with. There is a need for mechanisms which stop those individuals from negatively affecting the greater proportion of conscientious and law-abiding farmers. Regulations need to be soundly crafted.

For farmers, as with any industry, being proactive in an approach to policy and regulation means that positive outcomes are more likely. If the industry sees a potential problem it is far more effective to show the government a better way forward before there is significant pressure rather than to wait until the pressure cooker effect happens when there can well be a political backlash; for example, the term Dirty Dairying in New Zealand was born when activist groups campaigning against farmers demanded instant remedy. Now, in Wales there is a growing problem of pollution of water courses from dairy farms. Whether perceived or real this is gaining momentum in the press. Welsh Government officials have said they want farmers to provide the solutions and that if they don't, government will have to intervene. Farmers have the opportunity now to find the best possible solution for them rather than at a later date having a compromise influenced largely by lobbyists from the other side demanding retribution.

Farmers generally want to do the right thing. I have spoken with many farmers who are more than happy to change their farming practices to be more sustainable and environmentally sensitive but their business still needs to remain profitable.

### 6.2 Language

Often the three sectors that I am discussing, namely government, farmers and academics, all speak a very different language. I found, while in Switzerland, the professors I met spoke of protectionist capitalism, bureaucratization and Tall Assemblage thinking in Agri-Environmental governance: these meant very little to me but was part of their familiar terminology. While working for Welsh Government I found that acronyms such as SMNR (Sustainable Management of Natural Resources) and PES (Payment for Ecosystem Services) are central to their working day but meant very little if anything to farmers. Farmers on the other hand prefer to talk and think in terms of practical on-farm implications, how something affects their bottom line and they want specific answers to questions on the exact nature of the outcomes they are being asked to deliver.

In India this point was made by many of the organisations that I met. They said that the difference in use of language is a barrier to better communication between farmers, government and academics. The same word can mean very different things to the different people. I noticed when in India that an incentive given to farmers for "Greening" was to promote the use of sprays and fertilizers to produce higher yields. This shows the importance of making sure that the messages given translate to the audience with the meaning intended.

One solution might be using intermediaries to translate between each sector, but another might include such awareness skills in the training and education of each sector and very importantly the coming generations in every walk of life.

## 6.3 The Role of Science and Evidence

There are many different types of evidence from the scientific peer reviewed science which is considered to be indisputable to anecdotal evidence taken from someone's experience which is important but not scientifically proven. I believe that we expect that policy and regulation to be based on scientific evidence however there seems to be a current movement throughout the world that evidence is being overruled by public perception of ethics and morality.

This was particularly the case with the review of shooting on public land in Wales where in July 2017 the Minister of Environment wrote to Natural Resources Wales to say that, against its advice from a full consultation which followed scientific evidence, she was minded to refuse to allow shooting to continue on public land due to what she perceived as public opinion mainly taken from the outcomes of a poll. When the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust commissioned a similar independent poll, the public opinion came out in favour of continuing to allow shooting of pheasants on Welsh Government land. This demonstrates how unreliable polls are and raises the question of what credibility should be given to them. What value should be set on opinion polls as opposed to scientific evidence? Social science would be welcomed but polls can be misleading as demonstrated during the Brexit polling where a remain outcome was expected.

We see similar disregard for evidence in the arguments presented when considering a badger cull with regards to TB eradication or the role of predator control in species survival such as the curlew. For the curlew and similar species, scientific evidence demonstrating that predator control is necessary in order to redress the balance in nature and this has been ignored for years: we are now at a critical point with the imminent loss of many ground nesting bird species in particular, whilst the predator species such as foxes, crows and buzzards thrive.

Farmers will rarely put in writing that which they know to be true from generations of observation and experience. NGOs and others involved in conservation work claim expertise which is taken into account when developing policy while sadly all the knowledge known to the farming community is unheard.

An exception to farmers not documenting their knowledge are the Nuffield scholars' reports. These provide a readily accessible library of papers on a wide variety of topics written by agriculturalists with experience and knowledge of their subjects, but it is to be questioned how many get sent to government or are read by policy officials to inform a view.

## 6.4 Public Perception

Public perception of farming certainly influences policy. On my travels it seemed to me that farmers were regarded in a more positive light in Switzerland and India.

Switzerland is a wealthy country where the public seem to support what they see as their peasant farmers who are paid an average of 60,000 Euro a year for not only delivering environmental benefit but also for maintaining a cultural and social heritage, such as the small dairy herds in the Alps.

## 6.5 Farmers' Approach

The coal and steel industries in the UK both believed they were indispensable and took a unionist approach to negotiating their futures and both industries were decimated. As farmers, including my

own family, we feel indispensable as we can see the importance of food security to the UK and on a world scale. We believe that we have a large part to play in feeding the UK but in this new world of global mobility politicians and retailers see other options available to feed our nation.

Though it would seem highly risky and unnecessary to us as farmers, there is the option of importing all our food. As most countries in the world inject funds into their food production systems then it may seem cheaper to import food rather than produce it in the UK. There is no current commitment in our Government's policy as to how much food we as a nation should produce for ourselves. In a world that measures success with growth in GDP without taking into account environmental and social costs, how can we be certain that a greater percentage of our food will not be imported rather than produced at home? Politicians may focus on a move towards a countryside which is a playground for our nation and for visitors through tourism with no regard to the production of food.

It is therefore, of paramount importance that as farmers we engage with the public, politicians and the government in a positive and proactive way.

## 6.6 Collaboration

Collaboration produces greater strength particularly to smaller farmers and can produce landscape scale action.

The most obvious demonstration of collaboration on my travels I found was in the Andhra Pradesh region of India. It has been greatly promoted since the 1980's floods and focused on enabling farmers and helping them. There was a great deal of focus on providing assistance in knowledge. They seemed to have a good knowledge transfer system in place where groups of farmers work with their local facilitator/government officer feeding information back to research institutions which pursue issues and find solutions. The research centres host farmer group visits led by their local government officer and technicians and there are incentives to use best practice.



***India, local community paid to work collaboratively on projects.  
Here terracing land for agricultural production***

*Photo: Author's own*





*Sue Evans speaking to a farmers group who meet regularly in the Kotturu*      *Photo: Author's photo*

## 6.7 Culture

In Wales language and culture play a very important role particularly in rural communities. This was similar in Switzerland and India where there was a genuine desire to keep farmers in the rural areas. Land tenure played a big part with limits to size of holding in both countries and it seemed that this could play a significant part in the difference to the public perception of farmers.

## 6.8 Trust

Farmers don't trust government: for example, I visited a farmer in Wales recently who had produced some extraordinary habitat and biodiversity and I asked if they would be willing to allow Welsh Government officials to visit. I was told no as they were concerned that they would have an SSSI designation slapped on the farm and they would have to stop doing that which they have done to create this wonderful habitat and it would all be lost. But equally, do the public trust British farmers?

I found that academics don't trust government and therefore don't put their ideas forward. It is essential to build relationships and trust between all involved in order to communicate effectively.

## 6.9 Sustainability

In Wales we have the Well-Being of Future Generations Act which requires all policy and regulation to consider the longer-term effect for future generations. This is potentially a great tool for farmers who generally aim to create a long-term business and asset for future generations.

## Summary

However clear-cut evidence may seem, the husbandry, economic, social, cultural and environmental factors make the context in which we farm a complex area where each farm may need different levers and actions to meet the same objectives. This makes the whole area of influencing policy and regulation very complex and unpredictable.

The lack of practitioner evidence being adopted, lack of trust and the different language used by different groups are real barriers to creating effective policy and regulation. Change is needed by everyone



involved to develop better exchange of information to take the farming industry forward into a more sustainable future.

Globally, morals and ethics are now put forward as a priority which seems to override science. These make it harder to make effective decisions which deliver the intended outcomes. For that reason, I believe that we need to work closer with social scientists to see how to present our own evidence so that the general public can understand more about the impacts of different demanded solutions.

## Chapter 7 Discussion

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### 7.1 Introduction

So how does the UK and its devolved governments work as a nation towards better policy and regulation? I believe that farmers need to play a bigger part in creating the content of longer-term policy and regulation that will affect them. In order not to end up with knee jerk reactions from government it is best for the agricultural industry to lead in developing voluntary schemes supported by regulation which makes it easiest for farmers to do the right thing.

But how?

### 7.2 Getting better based regulation

The Government wants to create more informed regulation, but it needs reliable information in order to do so. The issue is not only having capable policy writers but how they tap into the background and experience which should form the foundations of their approach. I believe that if those writing policy and regulation were better informed as to the likely impact on the ground, they could produce better regulation. Therefore, there is an opportunity for farmers to fill that knowledge gap.

I had thought that sound unbiased evidence might be provided to the government by academics, but it appears that academic world's priorities and funding streams do not help in this direction. There is a need for their sponsors/funders to focus their funding on more applied work.

### 7.3 How can farmers' best influence policy and regulation?

A key issue is how to get farming voices to be heard and to gain the respect and understanding of the wider urban community and the policy makers?

Farmers can influence policy by telling lots of people about their subject from the press to Welsh Assembly Members (AMs) and Ministers, to officials and others who may also speak to people in a position of influence. The greatest compliment is when a Minister presents something that you have said as their own idea and puts measures in place to deliver. It may not be a straight line to achieving goals but by persevering with championing an idea it is possible to make a difference and for the idea to become a reality.

### 7.4 Unintended consequences

Unintended consequences are a real risk in regulation. In the Netherlands many farmers believe that the phosphate regulations recently imposed on them could lead to bankruptcies amongst farmers with a consequential fall in land prices which could potentially affect the stability of the Banks.

There was debate amongst the Dutch farmers and their advisers on how poorly the farming unions are representing them and a feeling that the national Robo Bank will have a greater effect on influencing the government positively on behalf of farmers because of the threat of farmers going bankrupt in significant numbers, resulting in a drop in land values (now reaching 100,000 euro per ha in one area we visited) which would have a significant effect on the bank. One of the advisers thought the only solution would be to reduce cow numbers by setting a maximum cows per ha to achieve a far more equitable solution. However, some within our UK group of seven farmers suggested that such action, if it occurred in the UK, would result in the unintended consequences of farmers buying unsuitable cheap land which could be a long distance from the dairy farm on which they could claim their high cow numbers while spreading

slurry on a very small area, therefore not addressing slurry pollution problems. This serves to show that full discussion with those involved can help avoid unthought through consequences.

There needs to be more joined up agreement across Government divisions taking into account the whole long-term goals for the area. Communities need to be engaged and motivated to help provide the local solutions which will work best in that area potentially with an incentive such as a collaborative scheme.

## 7.5 Better delivery of schemes and regulations

In my travels it was clear that complex regulations are difficult to comply with and may not even reflect how farming systems work. It is also very difficult to get farmers to engage with creation of policy and regulation. A more effective approach in designing and delivering new regulation may be to put trial regulation into place, potentially across the whole country, which would allow adaptability and change to take place within a set time frame to iron out unintended or perverse consequences. In some cases, a small local trial may be appropriate, but where a measure needs to be taken across the board, steps should be put in place for regular reviews with farmers as to how the process is working and legislation should be framed in such a way as to allow for changes.

## 7.6 Post Brexit payments to farmers

Payments to farmers post Brexit are being focused on delivering public goods and removing a basic payment which is available to all farmers. When deciding payment methods to farmers post Brexit there are potentially unforeseen consequences of not continuing with some form of basic payment available to all farmers.

Regulation is ineffective without adequate enforcement. With the plethora of current regulation currently in place farmers feel overwhelmed with the task of trying to remain compliant. The current random checks which are carried through the delivery of EU funding requirements result in farmers perceiving a real risk of enforcement should they be in breach of regulation as well as Cross Compliance. However, should we move to a system post-Brexit where farmers are not in receipt of a basic payment or payment of any sort, there will be reduced number of random checks and little threat of enforcement.

From discussions with farmers from all countries visited there is a common thread that farmers are less likely to comply with regulation where there is little threat of enforcement.

Post Brexit this would be even more likely where farmers feel that they have no choice but to react to market drivers in order to maintain a profitable business. An example of this in the UK is demonstrated by the increase in intensification of dairy farms encouraged by market forces which include things such as penalties by processors for smaller quantity of milk collected. But the intensification of dairying in Wales is being blamed for increased pollution of the waterways. Are the current regulations which address slurry pollution in Wales adequate and, if so, does that mean that greater enforcement is necessary rather than new regulation? Or are there better solutions? How do we get processors not to penalise smaller units? Should the farmers themselves be proactively addressing the public concern over pollution? Can they afford to do so and will the few who do not comply ruin it for those that do? Are there other ways farmers could increase profitability and be more sustainable in their nutrient use for example through introducing glass houses or polytunnel vegetable or fruit production which requires lots of water and nutrients. Should there be incentives to create less intensive but sustainable dairying as in the Alps or regulation as in the Netherlands to move away from intensifying production?

Too much and ineffective regulation itself causes issues in the farming industry and farmers currently struggle to stay abreast of what is required.



***I visited dairy farmers in the Netherlands who have had to reduce stock numbers following recently imposed regulations intended to reduce phosphates.***  
*Author's own photograph*

In the arable sector, it seems to me that one of the greatest problems in food production worldwide will be maintaining soil quality with a need to get organic matter with its increased number of worms back into soils so that the food that is grown has some quality other than the chemical NPK inputs applied. From this a positive can be developed for the nutrient rich farms of Wales, for example turning the slurry into an asset by promoting its use against increasing costs of chemical fertiliser and producing more sustainable systems. Through the use of technology such as de-watering of slurry and turning it into pellets, it could be loaded onto returning waggons who bring feed and straw from Eastern England where soil would benefit greatly from the organic and nutrient content of this product or we could develop intensive horticulture of our own.

The answer is that we need the right balance. Effective concise regulation coupled with appropriate enforcement, which makes it easiest for farmers to do the right thing, along with incentives in order to maintain profitable dairy farms where farmers are required to act against the drivers of market forces to deliver wider priorities. Clear communications are needed between farmers, policy makers and experts on the science and technicalities of the problem, gathering the evidence of all aspects of the issue, and working out how farming practices can be changed practically and cost effectively. The processors should be promoting that which the public demand. Many such as Waitrose set their own additional standards, penalties and incentives. This should then be communicated to the general public in a way that is far more accessible and appealing to the public.

Another new factor to take into account is that, heading into a post-Brexit world, the farming sector is leaving behind ring fenced agricultural support funding. It is entering into direct competition for government funds including with health and education amongst others. There is a need to show multiple benefits from farming activities which also include health and education, along with more obvious features such as environmental enhancement or good animal welfare.

The British food sector must develop the market for sustainable food and enter into wider discussions on issues such as the carbon debate on how many miles food travels and the nutrient content of the food we produce.

We as an industry need to turn things on their head through innovation or by doing things differently on our own farms.

We must work with others who wouldn't be expected to be our allies to present a vision of future land use whether they are commercial entities or NGOs. Saying that we should continue to farm as we are because that is what we have always done will not wear in future. We must consider wider alternatives.

## 7.7 A single voice for the industry

I have been told by farming unions and other lobbying organisations that it is imperative to present a single voice on issues. I'm not sure that is strictly true.

A Welsh farmer asked me if the farming unions were not doing their job? I believe that they are doing what they are expected to do by farmers which is to present a union type face to outside threats to traditional farming practices. They are not a scientific research institution like the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust and have not in the past had the remit to produce evidence.

The single industry voice about the CAP review payments resulted in Fairness for the Uplands which took the Welsh Government to High Court and drove a wedge between farmers in Wales. What was needed in that instance was a more complex explanation to government of the needs of different parts of the farming industry. With more information on the characteristics of different farming businesses, government should be able to develop appropriate and effective policy and regulation with regard to how it will affect each group. However, farmers, lobbying organisations and all others that represent the best interest of farmers must not over simplify complex issues and need to explore wider potential solutions in order to deliver the best policy and regulation. This has been demonstrated by the ineffectiveness of prescriptive agri environment schemes.

I also believe that farmers, NGOs and all with an interest in rural policy should get together and highlight the 80% of things that they all agree on. That would be a great stepping stone towards a solution.

## 7.8 Modern day social perceptions of a rural life

There is a perception amongst many farmers that I spoke with from the UK that there is too much bad press about farming and that it is further fuelled by responses from the industry which focus on farmers rights rather than engaging with, and presenting choices, to our customers.

At a time where there is a growing divide between urban and rural populations it is imperative that we make the case for maintaining our rural social and cultural heritage as well as our businesses. It seems as if the urban majority seek to dismiss anything which does not satisfy the urban ideas of morals and ethics. At the same time farming businesses are also having to compete on a world market against cheap imports from countries with lower animal welfare and less sustainable methods.

How farmers interact with the public is of paramount importance to the outcomes of policy. There is a perception that all farmers are wealthy and privileged, therefore they should not be supported by public funding. We need to be clear about what the public are paying for and take them on a journey which they will enthusiastically support.

Why do the general public accept the control of deer, grey squirrel and mink which are controlled by government in the UK, yet they are anti the control of badgers, crows, magpies or foxes? While working

within collaborative schemes we have found that if we have 60 or 70 sceptics in a room or out on a moor within two hours their opinions and views of predator control changes. This shows how much can be done when there is an opportunity to inform but it also presents us with a huge task.

How many of the public or even farmers could recognise good habitat and biodiversity? Who defines good habitat and biodiversity? The post war received view was that tidy farmers are good farmers and therefore those with big hedges, nettles and thistles in their fields are untidy and therefore bad farmers. Great habitat and biodiversity are messy, overgrown and counter intuitive to not only farmers but local communities. How do we change farmers' perceptions, let alone public perceptions, of what is good? What is our vision? How do farmers make a living delivering public goods if the actual vision is not agreed?

I believe we must encourage more social science research, that is an understanding of the different views from different parts of society, to support our work if we are to engage positively with the public and policy makers in the future. We need to supply answers to the Ministers and officials to make it easy for them under public scrutiny to make the right decisions for agriculture. The social science should enable a more genuine conversation and ultimately garner more support from the public for rural activities and farmers. This should improve the relationship between farmers and the public.

However, Government should aspire to base their decisions not on populist minority driven polls but on science-based evidence and local (rural) population needs, after all Darwin faced a huge backlash when he eventually felt brave enough to put forward his concept of the Origin of Species against all religious beliefs of the time which cast him as a heretic.

## 7.9 A Unionist Approach

As stated in Chapter 6.5, farmers, including my own family, feel indispensable as we can see the importance of food security to the UK and on a world scale. We believe that we have a large part to play in feeding the UK but in this new world of global mobility, politicians and retailers see other options available to feed our nation.

In a world that measures success with growth in GDP without taking into account the real environmental and social costs it may seem cheaper to import food rather than to produce it ourselves. Politicians may focus on a move towards a countryside which is a playground for our nation and for visitors through tourism with no regard to the production of food. Our focus since the second world war in the UK has been to maximise food production, it seems that now we must consider changing that focus.

## 7.10 Consultations

Many farmers feel that they do not have the time, inclination or confidence to respond to consultations.

There is an opportunity here for the universities and colleges to help bring out better consultation responses from coming generations by setting tasks for students to respond to consultations. In this way they will actually read a consultation document, should receive tutorage on the purpose of consultations and therefore be more likely to respond to one in later life.

Where government or NGOs or others go out to farmers to seek their views, there is a perception amongst those asked that it is a tick box exercise as in the case with the Crofters in Scotland as mentioned in Chapter 5. So, when consultation is carried out, it is imperative that there is a recognition of the input from all parties and that there are outcomes which reflect that consultation. If not, there is a great danger of people being switched off from engaging with any sort of consultation and I found this to be the case with many farmers that I spoke with across the UK.

Governments would like full consultation responses from every respondent, but I suggest that it is just as important to engage with individuals who may have a particularly strong opinion about only one aspect of a policy or that have expertise in one particular part of a consultation. I therefore recommend that Welsh Government should encourage wider engagement in consultations by inviting people to submit responses to only one question or in any way that they are inclined to do so rather than giving the impression that responses are needed on everything. Also, when Government consults with farmers and or invites them to attend a meeting there must be a discernible outcome from each event or meeting otherwise farmers will remove themselves from the process.

## Chapter 8: Conclusions

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1. If farmers and their advocates don't provide Government with solutions others will
2. Individuals can and do influence policy and regulation
3. Good governance makes it easier for farmers to do the right thing
4. Communicating a positive message providing solutions is key
5. Closer working between farmers, academics and government is required



## Chapter 9: Recommendations

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### To Farmers

- Present solutions - communication is key, tell everyone you meet your ideas
- Find **new** advocates of what you want to promote however unlikely they may seem
- Demonstrate better ways of farming as this is the most effective way to influence future policy and regulation.
- Invite politicians and their staff onto your farm and present solutions
- In order to avoid knee jerk reactions from government the agricultural industry must lead in developing voluntary action or certification schemes
- Ensure farmers are portrayed in a better light
- Present evidence in a way that Government understand. This does not have to be in a consultation format but with facts and figures where possible.
- Respond to important consultations individually however briefly

### To Government

- Practitioner and experiential evidence should be genuinely sought as well as more academic peer reviewed evidence when developing new policy and regulation.
- Do more testing of proposed policy on end users to ensure best outcomes and avoid unintended consequences
- There is a need to remove silos and work in a multi-disciplinary way across divisions
- Ensure that genuine consultation with farmers takes place which acknowledges all views, share and deliver outcomes and actions from each event.
- Become more adaptive and able to respond quickly to change.
- Make funding to academics/academic institutions linked to industry needs and more dependent on useful outcomes which can be applied on the ground.
- Improve flow of information from the ground up to policy makers and back to farmers
- Encourage collaboration amongst farmers, with academics and wider industry and communities.
- Encourage wider engagement in consultations by inviting people to submit short or part responses.
- Look at Nuffield Scholars reports as evidence to inform policy and regulation
- Wales can lead the world in creating progressive and innovative governance

### To Academia

- Set tasks for students to read and respond to consultations so that when they leave education, they have the confidence to respond to consultations.
- Don't assume that Government will discover your research reports: put it in front of them if it is relevant.
- There is a need to work in a multi-disciplinary way across subject areas.
- Seek change in the institutional approach, including funding arrangements, to enable academics to work collaboratively with farmers and those working on the ground at all stages in the processes of identifying what needs to be researched, doing the research and then working out solutions which can then be applied for use.

## Chapter 10: After my study Tour

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The Nuffield travels brought so much more than answers to the subject I set out to investigate. There were so many elements of interest that I could write the length of this project again on each. There were the extraordinary sights, my favourite being the multi storey cow house in Hyderabad a fast-developing city of 10.8 million people. To the discovery of how the World Trade Organisation operates.

The difficulty in writing a Nuffield Report is really how to keep it short enough and not expand the subject area to include all the interesting things I have seen and discovered.

A week after returning from the Contemporary Scholars Conference in Brazil I started a new job as Director of the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT) in Wales while also continuing with the work that I had been developing. I realised that the GWCT are actually doing that which I believe we need more of in farming which is to carry out peer reviewed research the need for which has been identified from those working on the ground, enable its application on the ground and present it to Government influencing positive change.

Through my Nuffield research I met academics and am now promoting multi-disciplinary and collaborative working delivering research for rural communities. I would like to conduct a piece of social science looking at the wider issues within farming and rural communities from people attitudes to tidy farms versus habitat and biodiversity rich 'messy' farms. To explore the social science of the general public's opinions on morals and ethics challenging people's stereotypes with statements such as Nelson Mandela being a hunter and enjoying eating the game that he killed versus Hitler who was a vegetarian – who is to judge an individual's morals and ethics. There is a need for a social science study to help support how we live and work in the countryside or I may even just write a book along the lines of a modern view of rural living!

I will continue to work with my newly acquired knowledge to promote more collaborative working in development of policy and regulation.

## Acknowledgements and thanks

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I have learnt so much from my Nuffield travels which I have not been able to include in this paper. I have found keeping the content restricted to what now seems few words from the information which I have amassed over the last 18 months the most difficult part. I feel that the content of this report does not adequately reflect the sheer generosity of people from each country to share with me their working lives and thoughts on the questions that I asked them. I hope that I have got the most important learning from my travels down in this report and I hope very much that it will inspire readers to develop better ways to improve the process of developing policy and regulation.

I wish to thank the Nuffield Trust and John Oldacre Foundation for providing me with this extraordinary opportunity which has resulted in a far richer learning than I ever imagined and for the editorial help I received from Alison Blackburn and her great patience and persistence in finalising the report. There are the wonderful people who kindly included me in their conferences, visits and work such as Jérémie Forney at the Université de Neuchâtel, David Gough at Genus plc and H.R. Prakash, Director ARTIC in India.

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