Helping Manx farmers evolve and grow

Agri-News
July 2011

Published by Department of Environment, Food and Agriculture

DEFA to launch strategy review at Royal Show
By Ed Clague, Agricultural Policy Manager

The Department is hoping that as many farmers as possible, and those with an interest in the rural community will come to its stand at the Royal Manx Agricultural Show to provide input on the future of the industry.

Minister for Agriculture, John Shimmin, said "The manner in which we support our agricultural industry has changed significantly with the implementation of the Countryside Care Scheme (CCS). At the same time the world’s agricultural economy continues to globalise and rationalise. We must ensure our Strategy remains relevant and takes account of changes both globally and closer to home".

The Minister was keen to emphasise these preparations for a formal review were not a prequel to a reversal of policy. He went on to say: "The Department is often questioned on the logic of decoupling support from production, and is lobbied in some quarters for a return to the old production support. While the Department is concerned at the reduced throughput at the Meat Plant, especially quality cattle, a return to production subsidies is not a realistic option. Nevertheless I am concerned that some sectors of the industry do not appear to have taken the opportunity to focus on what consumers require, or diversify into new areas; this may be a result of the CCS reducing the urgency to change".

Guide to Isle of Man Food and Drink
By Kim Etherton, Local Food Marketing Manager

The third edition of the “Guide to Isle of Man Food & Drink” has now been published by the “I Love Manx” campaign. The Guide has been completely revised and includes more producers together with new information about the Island’s retailers and key food processors. It has additional details of which restaurants have achieved Harvest accreditation for their use of local produce, what’s in season and where local produce can be purchased. The Guide should be an invaluable source of information for all who are interested in Manx produced food.

The guide has been delivered to over 40,000 households on the Island and will be available at the Welcome Centre, MNH sites, Agricultural Shows and various other key outlets around the Island. Electronic versions can be viewed at www.ilovemanx.org.

Index

Minister’s comments 2
Preparing for the Review of the Countryside Care Scheme 3
Red Meat Sector 4
Countryside Care Scheme update 4
Isle of Man Creamery launches new products 5
Support for egg boxes extended 6
Making a Difference 6
Knockaloe’s 3 Legs of Man Still Flying 6
Isle of Man Food & Drink Festival 2011 7
The Challenge of Rural Leadership 7
DEFA at the 2011 Agricultural Shows 8
Tomorrow’s Farmer Awards 2011 – the final selection 8
Royal Manx Agricultural Show - History in the Making 9
Isle of Man Southern District Agricultural Society 9
Ho-Ho-Ho .... Christmas will be here before we know it. 10
Manx Food Heroes Awards 10
David Cain – Chief Meat Grader – Job profile 11
Dates for your diary 11
Market trends 12
BACS payments 12
Minister’s comments

Once again it is time for the agricultural shows, when many in the rural community demonstrate to the rest of us what great livestock and produce we have on our doorstep. Preparation for the shows will take months, for some, even years. All farmers instinctively know to plan ahead – nature forces them to do so. A farmer must plant a crop in the spring if he wants to reap one in the autumn. Farmers also know that nature cannot always be relied upon to act consistently; therefore, they must anticipate the unexpected and prepare as necessary.

Apart from planning seasonal agricultural activity, farmers must also think ahead for their businesses. Change happens and may bring both threats and opportunities. Plans are needed to maximise the latter and reduce the risks of the former. Unfortunately, all too often, this is something we put off until another day.

More than ever before, the future of the agricultural industry rests with those involved in it. It is essential that the industry builds the ownership of its own future; albeit with appropriate help from the Government where necessary. Just as the farmer who fails to sow in the spring cannot expect a bountiful harvest in the autumn, the industry cannot simply expect a bright future if it does not consider and plan for the longer term.

It is DEFA’s responsibility to ensure that farmers have as beneficial an environment in which to flourish as is possible. Concerns are often raised with me regarding DEFA policies and the effect they have on farm businesses. Common themes are: the sustainability of the industry’s infrastructure – in particular, the three processors; difficulties for new businesses to become established; stagnation of some established businesses; Agricultural Marketing Legislation; lack of market focus; and payments from the CCS acting as a disincentive or distraction from true commercial activity.

To address these concerns, the Department has begun work in preparation for the review of the CCS (required no later than April 2012), with the intention of starting a debate on the continued future direction of agriculture over the summer and autumn.

Government’s financial position is at its most challenged for a generation, and further reductions in government budgets cannot be ruled out. Any future DEFA strategy will need to ensure its efforts and support are directed into areas with sustainable and demonstrable benefits to the industry and broader community.

Farmers have many organisations which represent their interests. We will be looking to them to demonstrate true leadership, to fairly represent the views of their membership, to set out a clear vision of the future they desire, and most importantly the steps they think are required to make this happen.

The Department’s website already has a specific page dedicated to these emerging issues and we will be making a significant effort at the Royal Manx Agricultural Show to bring the initial consultation to the attention of both farmers and the general public.

No matter how thorough any future DEFA plan is, if the industry does not have confidence in it, it will fail. Therefore even at this early stage, your input and that of the organisations which represent your interests will be critical.

John Shimmin MHK
Minister

“It is DEFA’s responsibility to ensure that farmers have as beneficial an environment in which to flourish as is possible.”
Preparation for the Review of the Countryside Care Scheme

By Stuart Jaques, Director

It is two years since the introduction of the Countryside Care Scheme (CCS). While it has enabled DEFA to maintain the overall level of payments to farmers previously made through production subsidies, and further enabled recipients to take decisions beyond simply producing for specific subsidy payments, it would be naive to believe that the Scheme has met with universal acceptance – there are about 400 recipients and likely over 400 different opinions!

Because the CCS was such a radical change, Tynwald provided for the Scheme to be reviewed starting “no later than 1st April 2012”. Given that the scheme covers all aspects of agriculture, and much of the cultivable landscape, we are starting the groundwork for the review now.

The formal aims that the CCS will be reviewed against are set out below; however, right now we are simply seeking views on any aspect of the scheme: those that have caused most difficulty, those that are most appreciated, and those areas that may not have been covered originally.

Processors

An area of major concern to DEFA is the future sustainability of the three processing arms of Manx agriculture: meat, milk and milling wheat. We are clearly capable of producing sufficient quality produce to feed our nation, and we have the processing capacity and skills to continue to do so. However, the beef industry in particular has seen a retrenchment post-decoupling that gives rise to concern. While the uncertainty over the loss of Derogation, and confidence levels in the Meat Plant may also have had significant effects – the close co-operation of producers is needed to create a marketable supply of beef.

No return to production subsidies

The actions taken to reduce the costs at the Meat Plant by £1M, also demonstrated that subsidies had permitted the production of animals of many different sizes, weights and grades – creating such a varied supply of product that successful local (and export) marketing of beef was severely compromised. Individual farmers could produce for subsidy targets, with insufficient regard for market supplies. Subsidies will never be able to react quickly enough to customer requirements; additionally, the loss of the derogation removed the restriction on consumers that required them to purchase the products of the Meat Plant – whatever their quality. In order for the Plant to serve both farmers and customers, a more reliable supply of beef, in both volume and quality, is required – reflected in the new matrix payments.

Similar arguments apply to the other processors. While the range of supplies and product lines at the Creamery and Mill are much fewer, farm production must be targeted at consumer requirements - not government subsidies. If processors need support, this will come through government aid in establishing processing efficiency, not on-going producer subsidy.

Industry reviews

There have been many reports into our industry over the last 20 years; the most recent have produced common themes:

- Avoid commodity (base level) products beyond what is needed locally
- Develop a Manx product identity
- Identify and exploit new markets
- Increase processor's efficiency
- Increase farming efficiency

There is a mutual inter-dependence between our processors, our farmers and consumers. Sufficient marketable product needs to be provided to our processors by farmers committed to support our population who, in turn, support them.

Flat rate/extensive vs intensive farming

Other aspects of the CCS that have yet to be implemented may also influence future decisions: more intensive beef rearing and especially dairy enterprises, will experience a fall in funding as the current scheme progresses – is there a case to be made for compartmentalising the scheme across the different areas: livestock/dairy/milling wheat?

Environment

We can be justifiably proud of our countryside: it is part of our national identity and the most valued part of our Island lifestyle. The CCS seeks to maintain the landscape, yet we also have a small

Agri-environment scheme. Perhaps it is time to identify land that is unlikely to provide produce for our population and seek to enhance our environment through amending one or both of these schemes?

It has also been noted that the division of land into two categories (above and below the mountain line) has had the effect of reducing the transitional habitat areas between the two – perhaps we need to identify a third category of significant habitat value?

Availability of Land?

Comment has already been made by some farmers that land is not being made available for those that wish to increase their output. The Department would be interested in whether this is a commonly held view.

The Review

The review of the CCS (the will of Tynwald) requires us to consider the following three aims:

1. A reliable, sustainable and self reliant industry capable of feeding the Manx nation with a diverse range of food products including our staple foods.
2. An efficient production system combined with a tailored market focus and a strong, clean Manx brand image so that reliable profits can be obtained from the marketplace.
3. Responsible custodians of our countryside, natural heritage and food larder, whose contribution is trusted and valued by the Manx people.

I urge all of you to make the Department aware of your concerns, thoughts, and ideas, for the future of agriculture and the broader rural community.

More information is available at: http://www.gov.im/daff/food_and_farming/strategy.xml

Email: CCSreview@gov.im
The Red Meat Sector has been, and will continue to be, critically important to the Island's industry. We are in a time of great change; incentives and attitudes are also changing which are sorely needed for everyone to stand the best chance of capitalising on the opportunities that are out there. We need to improve relations and understanding to remove the history of one sector participant capitalising at the expense of the other.

Producers and processors must come together to address the threats to their sector. The largest threat of all appears to be profitability. The sector must develop into one that consistently sustains profitable businesses, attracting the next generation of leaders into the industry. The appointment of Kewin Kerruish as managing director is encouraging. A young man, willing to accept such responsibility, should send encouraging signals to the rest of our industry.

Past practices at the plant have not been sufficiently focused on the profit margins; however, they are now, and Kewin has a practical understanding of all the stages involved within the red meat sector. Supported by the team of Scott Baker, Paul Reid, Dave Overfield and with Roger Chadwick as Chairman of the Directors, the changes implemented are significant and amount, to date, to £998,000. Kewin is not resting there; the team are constantly looking to develop all stages of the supply chain to allow improved sustainable profits for all. The long term reliance on government support is not healthy in the current economic climate, and there has been a commitment by the management team to strive to eradicate this.

Kewin has established himself as a "doer". Leading the Meat Plant into a necessary regulatory environment, Kewin has ensured that the Meat Plant has the practices, procedures and paper work to assure that the food products leaving its doors have the quality assurance mark. This has ensured that even its toughest customers continue to source meat from our plant: even now after the derogation has gone. It's now a global market and consistent supply of a quality product is paramount to building up good customer relationships. If we were building and selling cars, we wouldn't last long if we couldn't guarantee consistent and quality vehicles.

Our Red meat industry has never faced the challenges that it does today. The removal of headage payments has affected all corners of the industry, and while there was initial disruption and discomfort, with it is the opportunity for change. Farm gate prices have risen; they had to and needed to. In turn Isle of Man Meats need to sufficiently incentivise and reward their producers in order for them to have confidence in producing red meat; yet passing these much needed price increases on is not as easy, when super markets are competing harder than ever before for income and don't appear to be willing to budge on reducing their profit margins.

The development of Isle of Man Meats is progressing. A keen and dedicated team, headed up by Kewin is committed and driven to working with the whole supply chain to ensure that opportunities are taken and our whole industry prospers together.
Isle of Man Creamery launches new products

Over the last month, Isle of Man Creamery has launched a new 1% fat Milk, a range of fruity cheeses, and grated and sliced versions of some old favourites. All are available via free doorstep delivery before 8am, or from retailers around the Island.

1% Milk

Containing all the taste of semi-skimmed milk, but with only half the fat, the new 1% Fat Milk is the perfect milk for health conscious consumers who are looking for a high quality, local product that is also a good source of calcium and Vitamin B12. The milk is sold in one litre bottles, costing £1 – and, by popular demand, the name is also provided in Manx: “Bainney 1% Saill”.

Return of Druidale – this time it’s fruity!

Fruit blended cheeses are increasingly popular, so the Creamery has launched its own delicious version. Based on a Druidale recipe created in 1922 by the Island’s first cheesemaker, Gladys Davies, there are three great flavours:

Druidale Cheese with Apricots – a fusion of mellow, velvety-rich Druidale cheese, studded with fragrant, delicately flavoured apricots.

Druidale Cheese with Cranberries – smooth creamy-rich Druidale cheese blended with refreshingly zingy cranberries.

Druidale Cheese with Mango & Pineapple – Druidale cheese blended with sun-blessed mango and juicy pineapple for a tangy tropical taste.

The Druidale Cheese with Mango & Pineapple has already been recognised for its quality and delicious flavour, winning the Silver Award in the ‘Dairy Innovation Category’ at the National Cheese Awards at the Royal Bath & West Show in Somerset in June.

Finally, the new cheese packaging features on-pack smart tag technology which, once scanned by a smartphone, direct shoppers to the Creamery’s web-site.

“Grate” new products

The Creamery has introduced four new sliced and grated cheeses to their award winning cheese range - Grated Mature Cheddar, Grated Mild Cheddar, Sliced Mature Cheddar and Sliced Mild Cheddar. Driven by consumer demand for more convenient formats of cheese, sales of grated and sliced cheese have grown hugely in the last 12 months. The Creamery’s award-winning Isle of Man Mature and Mild Cheddars are especially suitable for slicing because of their firm texture. The grating process releases the full creamy flavour of Manx mature cheddar, while the sliced and grated mild cheddars retain the fresh, clean, milky flavour of Isle of Man Mild Cheddar.

Sales Director of the Creamery Rob Evans said “new products are a key part of driving the growth of any business. All of the new products have been based on understanding what our customers want, combined with tailoring them to meet the needs of our retail partners. Initial sales on the Isle of Man are extremely promising and we have also received orders for the fruit cheeses and the grated and sliced products from our agent in Spain. Together with listings for these products from UK and Irish customers, these sales will contribute to a period of strong growth for our business. This good business will in turn result in us continuing to pay our dairy farmers the best possible price for their milk”.

Druidale Cheese with Mango & Pineapple – Druidale cheese blended with sun-blessed mango and juicy pineapple for a tangy tropical taste.
The Department has extended its support for the egg industry. A budget has been established to provide financial assistance of 50% towards the cost of boxes.

Conditions for support remain the same as before: restricted to egg producers registered with DEFAs Food Safety Unit and all boxes having to carry the Department's approved logo as a minimum (three legs in a circle with the words "Produce of the Isle of Man" or "Manx Produce").

All applications for support must be approved in advance of placing an order. Claims must be accompanied by a relevant invoice. The Department may restrict the size of an order where it feels quantities are excessive for the business requirements, or to manage the budget available.

**Longer term outlook**

Production related support is not in keeping with DEFAs other support schemes and will continue to be kept under review.

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**Making a Difference**

“Making a Difference” is the headline for farm business options available from the DEFA Advisory Service to assist in the development of all farm businesses. These options are the ones that will make a real difference to you the farming business; they include a range of tools to assist in the key areas of understanding business performance which then allows for progress: “Making a Difference” within your business.

Suckler cow fertility and analysis of the financial and physical performance of individual enterprises are the main two options. Also available is a "Whole Farm Review", which includes a full audit of the all of the resources available to the business – land, labour, capital, livestock, machinery and so on, as well as an options appraisal and action plan... All of the above are explored in conjunction with the your expectations and ambitions.

Complementing analyses that are based on actual information is “Enterprise Costings”, which is based on predicted information. This is frequently utilised for forward budgeting but more commonly found when assessing business decisions and seeking finance. "Enterprise Costings” is most useful for those “what if?” questions: for example, what would happen if I increased my cow numbers by 30? What if I change from beef production to dairy?

The Advisory Service is already delivering these options to farm businesses. “Making a Difference” is being formalised within the Advisory Strategy in ensuring that the industry is fully aware of what is available and what options exist to help farmers develop their businesses.

Further information is planned for the Royal Manx show, and both Andy and I look forward to seeing you at the DEFA tent or out and about on the show field, should you require further information or would like to request a farm visit, please do not hesitate to get in touch with us on 685835.

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**Knockaloe’s 3 Legs of Man Still Flying**

With the Royal Manx Agricultural Show’s new home at Knockaloe, show visitors will hopefully appreciate a long-standing feature; that of the 3 Legs of Man design on the hillside to the west of the showfield.

Following on from the work of the former Knockaloe staff, William Qualtrough, who is one of the Department's tenants at Knockaloe, offered to apply the necessary fertiliser to the 3 Legs for the 2011 season and the results can be viewed from the farm and surrounding roads and countryside.

The 3 Legs design was originally pegged-out in the early 1950’s by the Department’s first Agricultural Adviser, George Howie, who applied a heavy dressing rate of nitrogen fertiliser to differentiate the design from the surrounding grassland.

The Department is very grateful to William for offering to apply the required 3 cwt of fertiliser. The 80ft high 3 Legs is generally clearer to view in the morning when the sun is in the east.
Isle of Man Food & Drink Festival 2011

By Kim Etherton, Local Food Marketing Manager

This year’s Festival will have not one, but two guest chefs, with Stacie Stewart, a MasterChef semi-finalist, giving cooking demonstrations on Saturday 24th September. Stacie has her own bakery and will no doubt demonstrate her passion for baking during the day. She will also be at the Festival on the Sunday when the celebrity chef will be James Martin from BBC 1’s Saturday Kitchen. Fans will be able to buy his new book and lucky ones might even be able to get a signed copy! Their chosen recipes are eagerly awaited and will be made available to Festival visitors, together with those being cooked in the Manx Food Theatre by local chefs and producers.

Also new this year will be a restaurant marquee complete with a bar selling a variety of Manx Ales. The restaurant will serve morning coffee and afternoon tea plus a carvery lunch (with vegetarian option), using Manx produce. In addition, there will be stalls selling Queenie and Manx pork baps, fudge, apple juice, chocolate and cakes so there will be no shortage of something good to eat and drink.

Apart from opportunities to taste and buy from over 20 producers, there’s lots to see and do whatever your age – scone making, races with a food theme, butter making demonstrations and much more in the Activity Marquee. Other attractions include a vintage threshing machine, the Manx Mushroom Experience and, on Saturday only, the amazing antics of the Play People. Manx radio will broadcast live each morning, so you might even find yourself on air. The Festival will end on the Sunday with an auction of Manx produce, with 50% of the proceeds being donated to the “Dreamcatcher Appeal”.

The Festival is sponsored by Manx Gas and is run in association with Manx Radio.

The Challenge of Rural Leadership

By Chris Kneale, Agricultural Adviser

DEFA is seeking to promote tomorrow’s farmers by offering up to two places on a Rural Leadership course run by the Duchy College in Devon next January.

The Agricultural industry is experiencing a period of significant and sustained change, and as a consequence never has there been such a need for Leadership within the farming and rural community.

DEFA has previously sponsored 3 farmers to attend the course. Tim Johnson who attended in 2009 said that “the message that was used throughout the course was about ‘getting off the dance floor and onto the balcony’ to see the bigger picture of what the opportunities and challenges are facing us and how we can use that to help in our careers”

Pentti Christian and Juan Hargraves attended in 2010. Since attending, Juan has recently met with his course cohorts in Poland and commented that “The course has made me look at the business from a different perspective and ask myself if the current practices that we follow are the right ones”.

The intensive two week residential course gives delegates the opportunity to:

• Develop your own business by having a better understanding and awareness of the strategic issues likely to occur over the next five years.
• Critically evaluate the alternative approaches to management and leadership among rural businesses.
• Increase your ability to motivate and communicate not only with staff and colleagues but the outside world.
• Increase the influence of the agricultural community both nationally and internationally.

Places on this are limited and subject to stiff competition. Further information can be found at http://www.cornwall.ac.uk/downloads/rbs/rural_challenge/Course_Synopsis_2011.pdf

If you think you would benefit from attendance on this course, please contact us for further details. Alternatively, if someone you know would benefit from this course, please nominate them in confidence.

For more details or to nominate yourself or someone you know, please contact Andy Macdonald or Chris Kneale at DEFA on 685835 by the 28th of July.
DEFA at the 2011 Agricultural Shows

By Kim Etherton, Local Food Marketing Manager

DEFA staff are busy planning their annual involvement in the Shows which includes growing plants for tubs, organising the logistics of delivering heavy (and sturdy!) picnic tables and other sawmill products and producing new displays and activities to interest and inform Show visitors. For this year, there will be information about the proposed new Ramsey Marine Nature Reserve, the potential for using woodfuel as a sustainable source of renewable energy, how to avoid food poisoning, what help is available from the Agricultural Advisors, what DEFA does.......and a fun, agriculture related quiz devised by the Field Officers. There will also be lots of free leaflets on walks and other topics for visitors to take away.

As in previous years, DEFA is also part funding the local food and drink producers’ marquees at the Southern and Royal and is funding the Manx Food Theatre at the Royal. The latter is run in conjunction with Kathryn Sentance of Relish Cookery School and she will be introducing a number of farmers and producers whilst cooking great recipes featuring local produce. The Food Theatre is an excellent way to showcase the joys of cooking using fresh local ingredients whose provenance is truly traceable – do pop in to watch and then taste!

At the Royal, Director of Agriculture Stuart Jaques will be on hand at 11am to 3pm in order to hear feedback from farmers and others in relation to the Countryside Care Scheme (CCS) and strategy for agriculture. See articles on page 3 for more information about the review of these important matters. Ken Kinrade, DEFA CEO will also be on hand to chat to show visitors throughout the weekend.

On the evening of 12th August, an invited audience will attend the annual Tomorrows' Farmer awards which are sponsored by Shoprite. Shortlisted farmers will find out who has won the Tomorrows' Farmer and Judges Award to a Young Farmer categories and the evening will end with a buffet featuring local Manx produce.

DEFA looks forward to seeing you at the Shows – do call in to see us!

Tomorrow’s Farmer Awards 2011 – the final selection

By Audrey Fowler, Marketing Officer

Now in its third year, the Tomorrow’s Farmer awards aim to showcase the best farmers on the Island. By telling their stories we can spread best practice, inspire others and influence the public about the role that farmers play in today’s society.

The sponsors, Shoprite, are delighted to continue their support for Manx Farmers by sponsoring the award again this year; for the first time they have a member of staff on the judging panel.

The last year’s winners were Dougie and Belinda Coole of Ballamodha Mooar Dairy Farm Malew and Trevor Quirk of Corvalley Farm, Kirk Michael.

Howard Quayle past president of the Manx NFU, and judge for the past 2 years, commented: “As a member of the judging panel of the Tomorrow’s Farmer competition, I have found it very rewarding to visit farmers at their place of work in the Manx countryside; witnessing first hand some of the exciting farming enterprises which are both producing food for our Nation, and contributing in a variety of ways to our Manx economy. It has been a privilege to go out on farm and see the diverse range of farming businesses which continue to contribute to an ever expanding range of top quality Manx produce.”

This year the majority of the nominees for the award were under 36, so this made it less relevant to have 2 categories for short listing. One shortlist has therefore been drawn up from the entries but 2 awards will still be made: Tomorrow’s Farmer and a special award to recognise a “young” farmer.

We would like to congratulate the following finalists on getting to this stage:

Juan Hargraves, Cooil Bros, The Views, Port Erin

Adam Kelly, Upper Howe Farm, Braddan

Andrew Sanders, Ballalough Farm, West Baldwin

Kathy Irwin, Greeba Farm Mushrooms

The farm visits will take place on the 20th July, with the winners being announced at the Tommorow’s Farmer Award Ceremony at the Royal Manx Agricultural Show, on Friday 12th August 2011 at 6pm.
As most people will know by now, the Royal Manx Agricultural Show (RMAS) is on the move this year to Knockaloe Farm at Patrick. On Friday 12th and Saturday 13th August, the Royal Show will be held for the first time in the west of the island. All year our literature has promised, “the move to Knockaloe is a daunting prospect for the RMAS, but we believe we have the experience and determination to make it a success” and now the time has almost come to deliver on that pledge!

The RMAS has had a number of venues in its 153 year history and each has found a special place in the hearts of the local community. Alternating between Douglas and Ramsey until 1991, the Show was held at the Nunnery for over a hundred years before moving to King George V Park. The northern venue was traditionally the Lezayre Playing Fields until that became too small and the move was made to Steward Farm at Sulby. Now, although we are very sad to leave the north, the future lies at Knockaloe and the RMAS is making a huge financial commitment to secure the future of the Royal Show for many years to come.

Show planning is going well and we are grateful for the great co-operation we have had from DEFA, and the heartening support from the local community; particularly the police who are working hard on the traffic arrangements. Entries are good, so we know that our trade exhibitors, livestock, light horse and dog exhibitors will be making the move with us. So now all we have to do is hope that the public will “come for a skeet” and we will have Knockaloe off to a great start. According to the Mona’s Herald of the time, the show at the Nunnery was frequented by “hundreds of worldly minded men, showy women, stallions rampant, bulls pawing up the consecrated ground and sleepy pigs too fat to keep their eyes open.” So apart from the pigs, hopefully too much won’t have changed by the time we get to Knockaloe….

With thanks to Harvey Briggs for excerpts from his History of the RMAS.

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Isle of Man Southern District Agricultural Society 30th and 31st July

The Southern District Agricultural Society Show, held annually at Great Meadow, Castletown, is a friendly community event that continues to attract thousands of people, both the loyal regulars and many new visitors each year.

The President this year is Mr Ian Quayle from Baldrine Farm, Baldrine, and the Vice-President is Mrs Belinda Coole of Ballamodha Moor Farm, Ballasalla. This will be the first time Ian and Belinda have presided over the Show and they are both very much looking forward to this year’s event, which should prove to be as much fun as ever, if not even more so, with some exciting new attractions on offer.

The Committee have dedicated themselves for many years to producing the Show and work tirelessly behind the scenes to make it a success. It is this devotion, and a continued enthusiasm for both maintaining tradition and embracing the new, that ensures the Show will continue to provide enjoyment and valuable memories for many more generations to come. The work that continues behind the scenes all year round is completed by a devoted team of volunteers. The generosity and support of the many local businesses that contribute to the Show is invaluable.

Show plans begin months in advance to accommodate an ever increasing number of Trade Stands and attractions. The Committee work hard to ensure that, while the Show adapts to an ever changing agricultural environment, it will always stay true to its roots by providing an opportunity for local farmers to showcase the best in Manx agriculture; creating a fantastic weekend’s entertainment for everybody.

The Society has developed the Show over 97 years to encompass many different aspects of Island life. Early on Saturday morning sees the judging of the light horse classes, then on to judging of all the other entries from the Island’s prime livestock, to fine displays of Heavy horses and harness. There are numerous other attractions, from vintage machinery, to fur and feather, photography and crafts. The dog show is growing in numbers all the time and is well worth a look.

The Grand Parade takes place in the afternoon and awards will be presented this year by His Excellency, the Lieutenant Governor, Mr Adam Wood. Entries can be taken on the day for all the classes in flowers, produce, craft and photography, and also for the fun pet and dog shows on the Sunday, so there is always something for everyone to take part in and enjoy.
Manx Food Heroes Awards

By Kim Etherton, Local Food Marketing Manager

Shoprite, IOM Newspapers and the Department of Environment, Food and Agriculture have launched this new food award to recognise innovation, quality and company excellence in the food and drink industry in the Isle of Man.

Over 40 entries were received for the awards across the five categories in this first year of the awards. The judging panel consisted of Andrew Thomas, Shoprite’s Chief Executive, Helen Byrne, the Managing Director of Isle of Man Newspapers, Kim Etherton from DEFA and Roy McFarlane from popular Douglas restaurant McFarlane’s.

The winners of the Manx Food Heroes Awards received their certificates from Shoprite’s Chief Executive Andrew Thomas and John Shimmin MHK, Minister for the Department of Environment, Food and Agriculture at a reception held at DEFA’s Headquarters in St Johns.

Award winners included the Apple Orphanage, who won the ‘Most Original Idea’ category, Greeba Mushrooms who were judged ‘Best Large Company’ and Brassica Foods and Laxey Glen Flour who jointly took the ‘Best Small Company’ title.

The Original Manx Fudge Factory and Wagstaffe’s Coffee were judged the best Food and Drink entries respectively. The People’s Choice award for the Favourite Manx Brand or Company went to the Individual Cake Company.

Andrew Thomas, Shoprite’s Chief Executive, commented: “Supporting local producers brings proven, tangible benefits for the local economy and I would encourage people to try any of the products from the companies that have been recognised by these awards. There is really good quality in the local market and Shoprite will do everything we can to support these fantastic companies.”

What we need though, is more high quality Manx goods to add to the offering we already have for our increasing hamper market. Given it’s fruit-picking time and well in advance of Christmas being upon us, now is the time to ask producers to contact us if they have goods that would work well in our range. I think it’s fair to say that between the corporate selling and walk-in trade, we will be short of stock rather than overflowing with it by the time New Year is upon us!”

Consider the hampers as a “sampler” of Manx product at its best. We have already proved that Manx products complement the quality of the hampers. The wicker hampers we use are the same as those received from Harrods and Fortnum & Mason in London; we know this because we use the same suppliers. By filling them with a sample of products available on the Island, we are able to promote you, as well as ourselves. It’s a lovely way to show Manx-ness at its best.”

If you have products available please contact Dian Skelton, Tel: 495467 or email: dian@mostlymanx.com or see their website: www.mostlymanx.com for more information.

Editor’s note: Currently over 10 Manx food and drink producers are supplying MostlyManx with products for their shop and hampers. If you require further information on food handling requirements then please contact DEFA Food Safety Unit by telephoning 685889.

MostlyManx have launched a market initiative, by placing double-page advertorials in both Money Media and Manx Life magazines, to promote their Manx food hampers. They are actively looking for new products, in particular jams, chutneys, marmalades and curds. Dian Skelton, proprietor of MostlyManx explains:

“The success of our hamper range last Christmas has given us the confidence to “up” the tempo on this product range. The response we received to them was excellent and we feel confident that we can double, or even treble, the quantities this year by pro-actively developing them.

Work is already half-way completed in the new show-room, and the corporate decision-makers will shortly be invited to come to take a look and, hopefully, place their orders for corporate-branded hampers. Progress is also being made in gaining a liquor licence to be able to sell Manx alcohol and our refrigerated units are already in place.

What we need though, is more high quality Manx goods to add to the offering we already have for our increasing hamper market. Given it’s fruit-picking time and well in advance of Christmas being upon us, now is the time to ask producers to contact us if they have goods that would work well in our range. I think it’s fair to say that between the corporate selling and walk-in trade, we will be short of stock rather than overflowing with it by the time New Year is upon us!

Consider the hampers as a “sampler” of Manx product at its best. We have already proved that Manx products complement the quality of the hampers. The wicker hampers we use are the same as those received from Harrods and Fortnum & Mason in London; we know this because we use the same suppliers. By filling them with a sample of products available on the Island, we are able to promote you, as well as ourselves. It’s a lovely way to show Manx-ness at its best.”

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The DEFA Agricultural Directorate employs three experienced meat graders at the meat plant. I joined in 1987 after working for the Fatstock Marketing Association for 17 years, when Eric Teare retired. Eric Drinkwater started a year later to replace Walter Collister and Wayne Kelsall was appointed in 1998 replacing Brian Kelly. Eric and Wayne are also both experienced butchers.

We provide IOM Meats with an independent weighing and classification service, which forms the basis for the deadweight transaction between producers, wholesalers and butchers. This information is also used for payments under the three subsidy schemes.

**Pigs**

The classification of pigs begins with a visual appraisal to identify any with carcase faults (skin blemishes and partial condemnations) and also those with poor conformation, particularly of the leg. An optical probe is used to measure the depth of backfat on the loin and this measurement is used along with the weight to apply a grade to the carcase.

**Cattle**

Cattle are identified by individual tag numbers and must be accompanied by a valid passport. The carcase category is established i.e. steer, heifer, young bull, cow or mature bull. Carcase conformation is referenced to the "EUROP" scale where class "E" describes carcasses of outstanding shape and at the other end of the scale; "P" denotes a poorly muscled animal. Fatness is assessed in 5 classes from 1 (very lean) to 5 (over fat).

**Sheep**

The classification of sheep carcasses follows a similar pattern to cattle although a dentition check is also used to identify animals which are over 1 year old as the spinal cord must be removed. Individual identity tag numbers are recorded, (which does not happen elsewhere) providing a robust level of traceability unique to the Island.

Each of the three species have set dressing specifications which detail which tissues can be removed from the carcase prior to weighing and this is constantly monitored for compliance.

**Audit**

Bi-monthly visits are made to the meat plant by George Allen who is the Divisional Manager for the Meat and Livestock Commission. He checks and reports on the grading classifications applied, providing a link to UK standards. The reports provide external verification, ensuring that our work delivers consistency of grading, dressing specification and standards, over the meat industry.

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**Jane Tierney leaves DEFA**

In the past, many farmers communicating with the Department would remember the voice of Jane Tierney who worked closely with Mick Gaffney in the Administration and Finance Division of DAFF. Jane has now taken early retirement.

Jane joined DAFF (now DEFA) in 1995 when the department was based at Murray House, Douglas. Jane and Mick were very much a team and worked tirelessly to meet various support scheme deadlines so that farmers received their payments on time.

The Department wishes Jane a peaceful and enjoyable retirement.

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**Dates for your diary**

**September**

**St John’s Supporters Produce Show**
– 3rd September at 3pm
St John’s Methodist Hall - Contact: Mr J Kneen Tel: 801467 or Sue Staley Email sips@manx.net

**Peel Gardeners Association Annual Show**
– 8th September at 2pm
Corrin Hall, Peel - Contact: Margaret Kennaugh Tel: 803269 Email: johnkennaugh@hotmail.co.uk

**Onchan Horticultural Society**
– 10th September at 2pm
Onchan Community Centre - Contact: Mrs Jennifer Corrin Tel: 625892 Email: jennifer_corrin@manx.net

**Ballaugh Horticultural Show**
– 17th September at 2pm
Ballaugh Parish Hall - Contact: Richard Clark Tel: 897311 Email: enquiries@ballaugh.sch.im

**Maughold Produce Show**
– 17th September at 2pm
Maughold Parish Church Hall - Contact: Corrina Perks Tel: 861101 Email corrina.perks@manx.net

**Cronk-y-Voddy Annual Produce Show**
– 22nd September 11am
Ballakaighen Farm, Cronk-y-Voddy - Contact: Marian Caine Tel: 844154 Email duckly.lucky@manx.net

**Eastern Young Farmers Produce Show**
– 24th September Entries 9am and 11am Viewing 1pm to 3pm
The Institute, Laxey, Contact: Janelle Quayle Tel: 410896 Email clucky.lucky@manx.net

**Isle of Man Food and Drink Festival**
– 24th and 25th September 10am to 4pm
Nunnery Gardens - Contact: Audrey Fowler Tel: 868585 Email: Audrey.fowler@gov.im Web: www.gov.im/defa/food_festival

**October**

**Kirk Andreas Root Show**
– 13th October at 3pm
Andreas Parish Hall - Contact: Pam Kinrade Tel: 880331 Email pam.kinrade@manx.net

**November**

**Southern Chrysanthemum Society**
– 5th and 6th November at 2pm
Morton Hall, Castletown - Contact: Bill Mizen Tel: 834723 Email: billmizen@manx.net

**Isle of Man Beekeepers Convention and Honey Show**
– 12th November 2pm
St Johns Methodist Hall - Contact: Harry Owen Tel: 801315 Email: harryowens@manx.net Web: www.isleofmanbeekeepers.com
Market Trends

This independent commentary has been supplied by Richard King, Business Research Consultant from Andersons. Details of how the graphs have been calculated can be found at www.gov.im/defa/News/agricultural.xml

Cattle. Prices for all classes of cattle in the IoM continue to outperform those of last year. A commitment by the meat plant on the island to link its beef and lamb price to the GB liveweight price has seen GB and IoM prices converge, it also means the price received by GB farmers is now even more important to Manx producers. Analysis of the GB price, reveals this has also remained well above that received during the same period last year even though slaughterings during the first half of 2011 have been above year earlier levels. With supplies in the UK expected to reduce during the second half of 2011, together with an anticipated increase in exports, firm prices are expected to be maintained.

Lamb. The finished lamb trade has been strong both in the IoM and GB during the first half of 2011. Similar to the beef sector, going forward the GB price will influence the IoM price even more now the prices are linked. A shortage of supply from New Zealand led to dramatic price rises as competition increased to fill the gap between old and new season supplies, with prices reaching a record high in the middle of April. As new season lamb numbers increase, the seasonal decline in price is taking place. But it remains to be seen by how far it will slide. The UK lamb crop is expected to be greater than last year following a favourable early spring. Domestic consumption is expected to decline as high retail prices discourage purchases and inflation continues to put pressure on household budgets. But lower production in Ireland and reduced supplies from New Zealand to the main European market is expected to keep the UK export market keen and domestic prices firm, although demand from France, where the majority of the UK’s sheep meat is exported to, has lessened during the first half of 2011.

Pigs. The pig price in the IoM continues to increase and is in the region of 13.5p per kg higher than levels a year ago. In the UK the DAPP has also continued to increase. Tighter supplies in May helped increase the DAPP further and rise above last year’s price for the first time in 2011. A good barbeque summer should see prices increase further before the seasonal decline. However, despite the continued increase in the DAPP, prices remain considerably below costs of production. BPEX estimates the costs of production for June to be 162p per kg and with the cereal price forecast to remain high for the remainder of 2011 and into 2012 further exits from the industry look inevitable.

Milk. Strong world market prices for dairy commodities have helped create upward pressure on milk prices. This has seen UK farmgate prices rise during months when prices traditionally fall due to the spring flush. World market prices for dairy commodities eased between March and April, illustrated by the Northern Ireland price which is more closely linked to this market. But they have since recovered and should help to maintain prices. IoM and UK prices remain considerably higher than last year and are expected to continue to do so. However, any price increases are being offset by high input costs. Going forward the weather will play a key part affecting both forage quality, quantity and the price of concentrates.