

Agricultural Strategy

2019-29

Isle of Man

High level principles

**Sustaining a vibrant Agriculture sector,
enabled to deliver a reliable and
profitable food chain, while
maintaining and enhancing the Island's
natural environment and capital**



Isle of Man
Government

Reiltys Ellan Vannin

Sustainable
Island



In 2016 I made a commitment to change the way agricultural support is delivered. Particularly in relation to supporting active farmers and production, to ensure that economic activity is maximised and the processors, are viable.

“Work with farmers to bring some economic certainty to the system that will enable young people to continue farming, preserve our landscape and provide viability for our food industry (exploit post BREXIT opportunities)”

The Department has worked with the Manx National Farmers Union (MNFU) to deliver a high level Agricultural Strategy. In addition to this strategy, delivering productive agriculture there is a strong commitment on delivering biodiversity, climate change mitigation, catchment management and Biosphere objectives, which are core objectives of the wider Department and Government.

Key Objectives: which are all of significant importance

- **The Environment** – Providing support for targeted initiatives that produce conserved and cherished landscapes, enhance biodiversity, sequester carbon and, and improve water quality, reduce flood risk and address the land management components of the imminent Climate Change Action Plan.
- **Supporting Active Farmers** – Ensuring that financial support is targeted at businesses producing food, protecting the environment and catchment and landscape management.
- **Productivity** – supporting marketing, efficiency, knowledge, benchmarking and advice to sustainably improve farm profitability and secure the long-term viability of the industry, post BREXIT.
- **Investment** – increasing investment through capital grants, business confidence and profitability.

Hon, Geoffrey Boot, MHK

This strategy builds on current policy and provides relevant and timely solutions for the industry and the wider Isle of Man Government, replacing the previous strategy¹

- Isle of Man Food Security Strategy²
- Food Matters – A Food Business Development Strategy, 2015-2025 To evidence rationale for the strategy³
- Our Landscape Our Legacy⁴
- Managing our Natural Wealth, The Isle of Man’s First Biodiversity Strategy⁵



¹ Developing a reliable sustainable self-reliant manx agriculture

² [GD2014/0042](#)

³ [GD 2014/0076](#)

⁴ [GD 2016/0027](#)

⁵ [GD 2015/0049](#)

The Objectives	What we want to do	How we will achieve this	When
The Environment	Provide support for the targeted initiatives that produce conserved and cherished landscapes, enhance biodiversity, sequester carbon and, improve water quality, reduce flooding and reduce greenhouse gas emissions as part of the Climate Change agenda.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uplands <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ New stewardship payments for appropriate habitat management. ○ Support for drain blocking, fixing chronic erosion, creating buffer zones etc. • Lowland - Agri Environment. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Soil <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Crop management plans including winter cover crops. ▪ Nutrient balance audits. ▪ Soil sampling and liming ○ Winter stubble, field margin and hedge management payments. ○ Support sympathetic native woodland planting schemes. ○ Maintenance, enhancement and creation of desirable habitats. ○ Hedges and dry stone wall repair. ○ Low cost, big impact Biodiversity efforts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bat boxes, scrapes etc. ○ Farm plastic disposal collection and drop off points. • Support the Land Management components of the imminent Climate Change Action Plan. 	As soon as possible (once approved by Tynwald)
Supporting active farmers	Ensure that financial support is targeted at farm businesses producing food, protecting the environment and catchment and landscape management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue an appropriate level of flat rate support for active farmers • New stewardship payments for the Uplands and specific highly sensitive sites. • Capital grant scheme. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Enhance profitable productivity by supporting investment in capital assets and the adoption of new technologies ○ FYM/Slurry storage and pollution control systems ○ Diversification and Food processing ○ Discretionary public access improvements ○ Reseeding, Weed wipers • Productivity advice. • Ongoing processor support. 	Immediately
Productivity	Support marketing, efficiency, knowledge, benchmarking and advice to sustainably improve farm profitability and secure the long-term viability of the industry, post BREXIT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an Environment where sustainable productive agriculture can flourish. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Provide an Advisory infrastructure – Benchmarking, Monitor farm, peer to peer advice etc. ○ Support, where appropriate new and existing food processing businesses ○ Provide Food and Marketing support 	Immediately
Investment	Increase investment through capital grants, business confidence and profitability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capital Grants for new technology and infrastructure. • Agricultural advisory provision. • Training. • Industry Education on and off Island. 	Immediately

Strategy F&Q's

The Environment

Uplands

- 1. How much is going to be paid for the new stewardship for habitat management?**
 - *Each habitat management agreement will be assessed on individual applications.*
- 2. Will inspections be carried out to ensure such management is being upheld?**
 - *It is the Department's intention to continue with inspections.*
 - *Habitat management agreements will be reviewed at least annually.*
- 3. Will the Agricultural Strategy encompass the Climate Change Bill?**
 - *The Agricultural Strategy will be a cross Government strategy and will if necessary, evolve to deliver the objectives of the Climate Change Bill which are likely to require increased sequestration and reduced emissions.*
- 4. What are the advantages of mixed farming?**
 - *Mixed farming enhances the biodiversity and productivity of farm land.*

Lowland-Agri Environment

- 1. Why is soil so important**
 - *Soils are the most complex ecosystem on the planet, harbouring enormous biological diversity that is hugely influential on several processes that sustain plant and animal productivity and health. It recycles nutrients by decomposing organic matter from plant roots, crop debris, manures, which supports carbon sequestration.*
 - *They are a huge reservoir of carbon and when managed sensitively they are a very good accumulator of carbon.*
- 2. Why plant winter cover crops?**
 - *Cover crops are grown to protect or improve the ground for future crops. Keeping soil covered over winter reduces erosion, and hence nutrient and carbon loss and environmental pollution.*
- 3. Will existing small native woodland areas be eligible for new scheme?**
 - *The Scheme is to encourage new planting initiatives, rather than existing woodlands.*
- 4. Is the Department going to provide training/courses for dry stonewalling?**
 - *Such training is available on Island and could be supported through the AFGS.*
- 5. Will support be available to those that have already embraced biodiversity efforts?**
 - *Yes, as they are now, payments could be made towards the maintenance and enhancement of desirable habitats.*
- 6. Will natural hedge boundaries be protected?**
 - *The Island has more hedgerows per square mile than anywhere in the UK; along with other features such as lines of trees, drystone walls, sodhedges and ditches. All of these make a valued contribution to landscape and habitats. Many of them also provide benefits in terms of helping to regulate soil erosion and in the management of water resources.*
- 7. How much CO2 does a tree absorb?**
 - *On average, one acre of new forest can sequester about 2.5 tons of carbon annually. Young trees absorb CO2 at a rate of 13 pounds per tree each year. Trees reach their most*

productive stage of carbon storage at about 10 years at which point they are estimated to absorb 48 pounds of CO2 per year.

Supporting Active Farmers

1. Will the Capital Grant Scheme budget be increased?

- Additional funding has been acquired to assist in the delivery of the strategy and some of this will be used to supplement the Capital Grant Scheme Budget.*

2. Will the Department only offer support on a certain type of Slurry pollution control system?

- Consideration will be given to all applications by the Department. However grant will only be awarded if it is supported by a waste management plan and fits with recognised industry best practice.*

3. Who will maintain the discretionary public access ways?

- Consideration would be given towards supporting the cost of maintenance.*

4. Productivity advice and ongoing processor support – is it the Department's intention to employ an advisor?

- The Department intends to employ a facilitator who will be able to direct farmers to the sources of best advice without necessarily giving advice themselves.*
- They will also organise/facilitate group learning activities.*
- It is widely acknowledged that peer to peer advice is far more effective than advisor to farmer advice.*

Productivity

1. What contingency plans are in place post Brexit?

- The Department has a team of people who will continue to work on a no deal Brexit strategy.*

2. How does the Department intend to deliver an advisory infrastructure?

- The Department intends to employ a facilitator who will be able to direct farmers to the sources of best advice without necessarily giving advice themselves.*

Investment

1. Does the Department intend to fully fund training?

- The Department intends to hold educational sessions along with practical advice – these will be facilitated by DEFA but delivered by recognised industry experts or employing the services of professional bodies. Funding levels as is the current practice will vary between 20-100% depending on the type of activity and the number of participants.*

2. Will sufficient Capital Grant funding be available for new technology and Infrastructure?

- The Department has been given additional funding towards implementing the Strategy and will continue to assess Grant applications on an individual basis.*

