



Boost for Island Abattoirs

HRH Prince Charles, The Duke of Rothesay, launched the new Association for Scottish Island Abattoirs on a visit to Islay in July, as part of the project he set up two years ago when he realised the parlous state of some of the island slaughterhouses.

The new association, chaired by Ronnie Eunson, Chairman of Shetland Livestock Marketing Group, will share best practice and provide business mentoring as well as capital investment and marketing support.

Bringing together businesses from Shetland, Orkney, Islay, Mull, Lewis, Barra, and North Uist, the project is led by one of the Prince's Charities, Scottish Business in the Community, with support from SAOS, The Prince's Countryside Fund and the Scottish Government.

Abattoirs perform a crucial role in island communities, supporting the work of over 2,000 farming businesses, whilst providing precious employment, as well as a vital provenance for locally-produced food. They have faced significant challenges to meet new regulations and a competitive environment. The Sustaining Island Abattoirs in Scotland Project was born from a successful research exercise instigated by The Duke of Rothesay in 2013.

The Duke has long spoken of the need to support vulnerable rural communities and the importance of taking a collaborative approach to build a more sustainable future.

Cabinet Secretary, Richard Lochhead, said the government was delighted to be involved in the scheme to "underpin the long term viability of the island abattoirs".

"The Scottish Government is committed to the principle that animals should be slaughtered as close to where they are reared as possible," he said.

Fergus Younger of SAOS, who has been involved since the project inception, commented: "The project and the new association strengthens the voice of the island abattoirs, many of which have been vulnerable to modern market and regulatory pressures. The support and raised awareness thanks to the involvement of Prince Charles and Scottish Government are invaluable, and we very much hope will make it possible to achieve a sustainable future for these abattoirs."

Ronnie Eunson praised The Duke of Rothesay and claimed that his involvement had probably saved some abattoirs from closure. He added that the Shetland facility had seen a threefold increase in the amount of beef it processed in the four years since it opened, with that figure set to increase in the future, adding that it was an example of best practice, largely because it was designed by the local industry with the community's needs in mind. "I also hope it will help to ensure that the folk that work in these abattoirs are treated with more respect as central providers of meat for the local community." He added.

Scottish Business in the Community Chief Executive, Jane Wood, said they would be using the project to develop new marketing opportunities for the islands' local meat producers. "Much work remains to be done, but the economic and social value of this intervention cannot be underestimated," she said.



Pictured, left to right, are: David Whiteford, North Highland Initiative; Thorfin Craigie, Orkney Abattoir; Hughie Donaldson, HIE; David Gillies, Islay Abattoir; Ronnie Eunson, Shetland Abattoir; Emma Patterson Taylor, SAOS; David Stewart, Scottish Business in the Community; HRH Prince Charles; Lauraine Manson, Shetland Abattoir; Jane Wood, Scottish Business in the Community; Roddy Morrison, Hayley McLay, both North Uist Abattoir; Flora Corbett, Mull Abattoir; Claire Saunders, Prince's Countryside Fund and Fergus Younger, SAOS.

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Mark Clark appointed Vice Chairman of SAOS

Managing Director of Grampian Gowers, Mark has served as a director on the SAOS Board since 2004. Welcoming his appointment Mark said: "I'm pleased to accept the role of Vice Chairman and the responsibility that goes with it. Year after year, SAOS gets on with the hard job of helping our farming, food and drink industry adapt to change, and the organisation is the embodiment of co-operation and collaboration, and an example to others. SAOS' expertise has never been needed more than now."

Mark joined Grampian Growers in 2002. The co-op is a specialist in production and marketing of daffodils and seed potatoes, a high proportion of which are exported around the world. At the 2014 SAOS Annual Conference, Mark described the co-op's strategy of growth through exporting, emphasising the importance of innovation, investment and collaboration in the business' success.



SAOS Training Programme for Winter 2015/16

Developing personal capability is one of the most effective ways to improve a co-op's performance. As expectation and demands on co-op directors, managers and staff increase, so does the need to improve skills and knowledge through effective training. Accessing bespoke training can be a problem for co-op businesses and we advise members to take advantage of the various training opportunities SAOS provides. Last winter's SAOS training events were a huge success with over 80 co-op directors, managers and staff attending the various events.

As part of continuous professional development (CPD), there is an expectation to regularly update skills, so if you haven't participated in any training for a number of years now is the time.

Director Development

Following last winter's successful suite of modules, three further modules are planned for this winter. Please note these workshops are also applicable to co-op managers and staff.

Getting a group of co-op directors and managers together provides great networking opportunities, and delegates always find it interesting to hear how other co-ops tackle similar issues. No matter your experience, you will always learn something which can be applied to your own co-op.

The following three workshops are planned:

1. **Effective People Management – Thurs 19 Nov**
2. **Improving Co-op Business Performance – Thurs 10 Dec**
3. **Co-op Finance for non-financial directors – Thurs 4 Feb**

The workshops will run from 09.45 to 15.30 at the Huntingtower Hotel, Perth.

The cost for each module, including catering and comprehensive materials, is £50 plus VAT which is covered by your co-op. For smaller co-ops concerned about cost, support to cover fees may be available.

Co-op Management in Practice (CMiP) – 25/26 Nov

This highly interactive, two-day residential course builds understanding of the distinctive nature of successful co-op businesses in 'next generation' managers. The workshop builds participants' understanding of co-ops, their specific issues and challenges, and provides a forum to share ideas and experiences from a range of co-ops. Participants will increase their skills, knowledge, and understanding which, in turn, will help their co-op improve its performance. There is a focus on helping future co-op managers acquire and develop new approaches for leading and managing co-ops in an increasingly competitive environment.

This popular two-day event will be held at the Huntingtower Hotel, by Perth. The cost including accommodation, meals and materials is £250 plus VAT.

Co-op Company Secretary Workshop - Wed 11 Nov

The co-op company secretary plays a key role in the effective governance of the organisation. Apart from the statutory responsibilities, the company secretary is the impartial point of contact for members in respect of how the co-op is run.

With the introduction of the new 'Co-operative and Community Benefit Act 2014' we thought it timely to hold a Co-op Company Secretary workshop. This will update on the new act, and will also provide an opportunity to review the role and responsibilities of the company secretary, talk about some of the procedural issues, interpretation of society rules, identify what is best practice and share experiences with other company secretaries. This is a great opportunity to improve your skills and knowledge in this very specialist technical area.

This workshop will also be run at the Huntingtower Hotel.

For further info or to book a place on any of these workshops, contact: anna.robertson@saos.coop or on 07741 314425. Please also get in touch if you have any other training needs.

Co-op Shorts in Shetland

We recently started work on the next two videos for our Scottish Farmer Co-ops YouTube Channel. We travelled to Shetland to find out more about the intricacies of mussel growing for Scottish Shellfish Marketing Group from Michael Tait and Kenny Pottinger. Our other new video will be on the Shetland Livestock Marketing Group (SLMG) Ltd and we interviewed Ronnie Eunson and Eric Graham.

Shetland Livestock Marketing Groups's main objective is to create a viable co-operative through the abattoir, livestock marts (selling sheep, cattle and ponies) and appropriate ancillary businesses. Through its trading arm, it also develops greater product recognition in the marketplace, which in turn drives lamb and beef sales. It was fascinating to see and hear what an important hub this is for the community and it was also good to hear more from Ronnie about his involvement with the Association for Scottish Island Abattoirs (see front cover).

Our video on the Scottish Shellfish Marketing Group will be the first where we show (almost) the entire journey from farm to plate as the co-op is the UK's premier producer of finest quality shellfish, supplying supermarkets, wholesalers and restaurants with mussels and oysters farmed from around Shetland and the West coast of Scotland. We've also done some filming with Stephen Cameron, the co-op's Managing Director, and of the Bellshill plant, where the mussels are cleaned, sorted, and either cooked for ready meal dishes or packed as live nets, ready for distribution.

These videos should soon be ready to view, along with the ones we've already created, at:

www.youtube.com under 'SAOS - Scottish Farmer Co-ops'.

PLEASE REMEMBER TO SAVE THE DATE FOR SAOS' ANNUAL CONFERENCE - 28 JAN 2016

SAOS' Stephen Young begins Masters in Management, Co-ops & Credit Unions

In August, SAOS Project Manager, Stephen Young travelled to St Mary's University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, to take part in the orientation session for a three year, part time, distance learning Masters course in Management, Co-ops and Credit Unions.

Stephen explains why he wanted to undertake this course: "After ten years working in the co-op sector and two and a half with SAOS, I felt that I needed to add some more depth to my co-op knowledge. An important part of the role of SAOS is taking academic theory and helping to put it into practice in our co-ops and this course should be the ideal source of academic thinking to bring back to our members."

Stephen had looked at a number of business courses but very few covered co-ops in any depth and certainly were not at the leading edge of co-op thinking, as is the case with St Mary's. He continues: "Almost as important as the course content is building a network which means we will have access to some of the best co-ops and credit unions in North America."

"The orientation lasted for six days and there are 20 students on the course from 15 co-ops and credit unions. There is a huge diversity in experience and scale of business, from Desjardins the Canadian co-op bank with around six million members, to food co-ops who provide groceries at a very local level. One thing we all have in common is a passion for co-operation and the enthusiasm of the group was infectious. It's a great group and

it was made very clear that the course is a big commitment and we will need to support and help each other to get through the workload.

"The course itself begins in September and I am looking forward to the challenge with a mix of excitement and trepidation. Hopefully I will be able to share what I have learnt with our member co-ops."

I'm very grateful to SAOS for supporting me in this. It's great to work for an organisation that has such a strong ethos of encouraging continuous development and learning."



ANM Update to Members

Despite continued trading challenges there was much positivity in the July Members Update from ANM Executive Directors, John Gregor and Grant Rogerson.

Through their new entrants' scheme, which has been set up to provide financial and advisory support to newcomers to the agricultural industry, members can benefit from the solid financial backing and industry experience that the Group provides. In turn, ANM can support the next generation of farmers, helping attract 'new blood' and help secure the industry's future.

Also highlighted was their vehicle purchasing scheme, with discounts of up to 25% on certain new cars, commercial vehicles or 4x4s through the Group. This is just one of a range of discounts available - all member benefits are currently being pulled together into a new information pack.

The weather has affected trade in the marts, and throughput for the livestock division continues to be difficult, not helped by the ongoing decline in the breeding cattle herd. However there has been an increase in throughput of sheep, with numbers well up on the year.

With reducing livestock numbers and CAP reforms impacting on the industry, the Group is keen to find ways to support members and encourage livestock production. ANM has been following closely the recommendations of the Beef 2020 report and they have been working with SAOS to consider how to take forward the output from the Focus Group discussions held last autumn. They reported having made good progress and hope to be able to update on plans in the very near future.

The Estates team is making good progress in the rural land and property market despite a host of uncertainties having had an impact on trading. The agency side has seen significant activity in property valuations, with a combined overall value in excess of £20m. They are also looking at new ways of increasing and developing services including 24/7 real-time access to all relevant information on each property.

Elsewhere in the business:

- The annual Taste of Grampian celebrated its 16th year in June, with over 14,000 visitors attending the food and drink festival at Thainstone.



- Maverston Golf Course celebrated its first anniversary in April by announcing plans for the launch of a 'FootGolf' facility and new 9-hole, 1,250 yard, Par 3 course. The golf club has over 200 members and its reputation is growing. In addition, the first house was completed on the Maverston Highland Estate with work on others underway.
- Determined work continues with Scotland's Rural College (SRUC) to secure a move to Thainstone if at all possible.
- The plans for the new Scotbeef Inverurie abattoir at Thainstone are progressing well, a very positive step for ANM members and the Scottish meat industry as a whole.
- Planning Permission in Principle has been granted to redevelop the current Scotbeef site for residential purposes with significant interest already shown.
- In Dornoch, the demolition of the old abattoir is complete and work is ongoing with the HIE and Highland Council to develop this site and regenerate the area.
- The Group has entered into a licence agreement with the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (AWPR) Consortium to use an area of their ground at Balmedie during the AWPR construction works. They are also working with the other site owners to develop a site Masterplan to be implemented following the completion of the road works.
- Work is ongoing on a significant project to update the Group's IT systems, including upgraded hardware, connectivity, security and data retrieval processes, as well as improving software and members share system.

In closing, they summarised that the Group continues to make good progress and the future remains bright thanks to their business diversification and a strengthening balance sheet.

Food and drink turnover record high figures shatter £14 billion barrier

Scotland's food and drink growth sector generated a record turnover of £14.3 billion in 2013, Food Secretary Richard Lochhead announced whilst on a visit to the Scottish Shellfish Marketing Group in Bellshill.

New analysis from the Scottish Government shows sector turnover is up £550 million on the year before and a staggering 24 per cent increase since 2008. It means Scotland's food and drink growth sector is on track to meet the industry's turnover target of £16.5 billion by 2017.

Food and drink manufacturing – which accounts for about three quarters of the total turnover figure – has grown twice as fast since 2008 as food and drink manufacturing in the UK as a whole.

Mr Lochhead said: "Our food and drink growth sector is a spectacular Scottish success story with turnover reaching a record high in 2013. To surpass £14 billion for the first time is simply outstanding and must give the sector real confidence.

"Our country is blessed with fantastic natural resources and this industry – with its strong brand and talented people - is Scotland's jewel in the crown. I am committed to seeing it thrive and flourish which is why the Scottish Government and our agencies are working closely with industry to achieve its ambitious targets, which have previously been smashed years ahead of schedule.

"It is because of this joint approach that we are leaps and bounds ahead of the rest of the UK, with food and drink manufacturing in Scotland, for example, growing at twice the UK rate between 2008 and 2013."

Scotland Food & Drink Chief Executive, James Withers said: "Breaking £14 billion for the first time is a hugely important milestone. Behind that huge figure lies individual success stories with food and drink business both large and small thriving in domestic market and international markets.

"This success is a direct outcome of the collaboration we've developed in Scotland with different organisations, government and individual companies working collectively. It has been a game-changer and has built a national identity for Scottish food and drink, driving growth at twice the rate of the UK average.

"No sector is without challenges. In food and drink, there are rising costs, variable exchange rates and really challenging times for farmers and fishermen who underpin the sector. However, the opportunities outweigh the challenges and we've earmarked over £2 billion in further growth in the next few years."

Stephen Cameron, Managing Director of the Scottish Shellfish Marketing Group, said: "It is fantastic news that Scotland's food and drink sector is thriving and I am delighted that the Scottish farmed shellfish sector is playing its role in this success story. We have an ongoing strategy to increase tonnages in line with market demand, which is rising year on year. We are experiencing a sustained increase in sales, and through product innovation have developed a wide range of mussel ready meals and other shellfish dishes that are proving popular with consumers."



Cabinet Secretary, Richard Lochhead with Stephen Cameron and James Withers at SSMG

Taste for Tourism event aims to develop Scotland's reputation as food destination

An event bringing together food producers, tourism businesses, tour operators, agencies and the media to learn about each other and discuss ways of further developing food tourism in Scotland will take place in Oban, on the 3rd, 4th and 5th of November.

The event will feature top international speakers experienced in building food destinations and question and answer sessions, as well as providing an excellent opportunity to network and taste some of Scotland's wonderful food and drink. Taste for Tourism aims to accelerate the move towards a critical mass needed to build a food destination. Building on what has been achieved during the Year of Food and Drink, delegates will be inspired to cement further Scotland's position as a Land of Food and Drink.

With two evening events, a day-long conference and a networking breakfast, plus the chance to take a number of trips to meet food producers who are already marketing themselves as a destination, Taste for Tourism is a unique opportunity for both food and hospitality businesses to develop a new angle as a food tourism destination. The summit will deal with building a food destination on the level of individual businesses, regional strategy and the wider Scottish brand.

For more information about the event and to register interest email: info@tastefortourism.scot



New Industry Development team for Scotland Food & Drink

Scotland Food & Drink has announced the addition of a new Industry Development team within the organisation. Graham Young takes up the post of Industry Development Director supported by Co-ordinators Kirsty George and Fiona Wallace. Mhairi Clarke is working part time as industry communications support. A full introduction to the new team members and their roles can be found at:

<http://www.foodanddrink.scot/news/article-info/6148/introducing-our-new-industry-development-team-.aspx>

Scottish Sourcing Study Announced

First Minister Nicola Sturgeon met with representatives from the agricultural industry at the end of August to hear first-hand about the challenges they currently face and what actions would most help. A key issue was how to increase Scottish sourcing at home and abroad and as a result, she announced a study to trace the origin of dairy products on shelves in Scotland's supermarkets to improve transparency and help to identify opportunities to increase sales of Scottish products.

The study will be carried out by Scotland Food & Drink and will establish where retailers are sourcing products such as butter and cheese. The results will be used as a basis for working together to achieve a step change, bring more Scottish products to market and improve access for shoppers to Scottish dairy products.

Further info is available here: <http://www.foodanddrink.scot/news/article-info/6184/sourcing-scottish-produce.aspx>



Innovative new anaerobic digestion plant for First Milk's Lake District creamery

The initial construction stage of Lake District Biogas, an innovative anaerobic digestion (AD) plant at the creamery, has been completed.

The partnership will convert the creamery's whey permeate into bio-methane for use by the factory and the local gas grid network. The new facility will be operational in early 2016 and will be the largest on-site AD plant in the dairy sector in the UK and Europe.

There are many benefits to the project, including:

Economic benefits, for both the creamery and its farmer owners:

- 25% reduction in the site's annual energy costs
- Price stability for the site's power supply - 40 million kWh per annum

Environmental benefits:

- Replacing fossil fuels and removing 7,000 tonnes of carbon annually from the supply chain
- Clean water discharge; removing phosphates and greatly reducing bio-oxygen demand

Community benefits:

- Helping to secure over 100 local jobs that are vital to the local area
- Eliminating hundreds of lorry journeys with all whey permeate being recycled on-site

Chris Gooderham, First Milk's Business Development Director, commented: "This new facility is an example of how we are continuing to progress our turnaround plan, by saving costs and improving the operational efficiency of every corner of the business.

"By utilising the very best technology from Clearfleau, First Milk will reduce the cost of handling the creamery's production residues, while generating renewable energy for use on site. Therefore the new AD plant is more efficient, produces much lower greenhouse gas emissions, as well as reducing off-site transport of residues and making better use of the whey permeate.

"Funding has been secured and the budget will be managed by Renewables Unlimited. This will be the first plant on a dairy processing site to feed bio-methane to the grid, which will then be used to run the factory and, as well, supply local users."

Craig Chapman, CEO of Clearfleau Limited added: "This is a major development for the Lake District Biogas partnership (First Milk, Clearfleau and Renewables Unlimited). The project will generate biogas solely from cheese production residues, using advanced British technology. It is a very positive move by First Milk to future-proof their award winning creamery operations by generating a significant proportion of their site's future energy needs."



New market-driven strategy brings success for East Dunbartonshire poultry firm

A niche player in the poultry sector, Barraston Poultry in Torrance, East Dunbartonshire, has increased its turnover by around 60%, and created five full-time staff positions following a shift to a new market-driven strategy. This move has seen Barraston expand its free-range broiler business to target customers who focus on Scottish provenance and high quality, including Aldi and Campbell's Prime Meats.

While Barraston already supplied ethnic Chinese and halal meat markets, Alan and Kenny Gilchrist, the family business managers, wanted to expand to increase volume and profitability. They approached SAOS for assistance from the Market Driven Supply Chain (MDSC) project.

Setting up a joint venture with farmer John Medlock in Kincardineshire, Barraston was able to supply the increased volume and the quality needed. Around 2,500 free range birds go to all Aldi's Scottish stores every week under its premium meat "Nature's Glen" branding, with a further 2,000 birds to Campbell's Prime Meats. The new business created is valued at around £1million. The company's six part-time employees are now full-time and with the new positions, the full-time staff complement now stands at 14.

Kenny Gilchrist said: "The help we've had from SAOS, Scottish Enterprise and the Market Driven Supply Chain project has been fantastic. The results speak for themselves with increased turnover and new customers like Aldi and Campbell's Prime Meats. The chance to help our employees into full-time jobs and recruit further staff is really positive."

The MDSC and Scottish Enterprise Account Management team worked together with Barraston Poultry to deliver the new strategy, which included a feasibility study and investment plan to

secure and install new infrastructure and processing equipment at the abattoir. In turn, this helped to secure Scottish Government capital grant support towards helping turn the plans into reality. This included a contribution towards equipment for transportation of the live birds, washing infrastructure and machinery to weigh, wrap and label the finished products. As a result of the upgrade, plant utilisation and efficiency has significantly improved and processing capacity has doubled. Third party SALSA verification also acknowledged the implementation of high food safety standards and quality assurance procedures carried out by the company.

Alan Stevenson, Supply Chain Director at SAOS, said: "These changes have resulted in a sustainable strategy to supply and promote high quality Scottish chicken. The increased sales and turnover, as well as the creation of full-time jobs, demonstrates that working collaboratively and responding to what the market actually wants can bring significant benefits for Scottish companies."

Cabinet Secretary, Richard Lochhead, added: "I'm delighted that Scottish Government funding, alongside the expertise from the Market Driven Supply Chain project, has helped Barraston to secure this new business. Identifying new routes to markets for our chicken growers remains a key element of our Poultry Plan. The company's commitment to supporting Scottish provenance, local suppliers and local staff is welcome and is clearly delivering positive returns in sales and jobs."



Kintyre Dairy Farm Workshops September 2015 - April 2016

There are a number of workshops that are free for Kintyre Dairy Farmers to attend over the winter period. Outline details of these workshops are provided below. These workshops are being arranged by the Prince's Dairy Initiative through AHDB Dairy, and Scottish Funding Council through SRUC.

Event	Content	Where	When	Supported By/Contact
Prince's Dairy Initiative Search	• Programme approach	Camelton	Evening 17th Nov	AHDB Dairy
The Cheese Making Process	• End products that farmers can influence • Technical improvements at the creamery • SAC cheese yield project	Camelton Creamery	2nd Dec	SRUC
Field Nutrition Meeting	• Led by AHDB specialists, Tom Davies • Nutrition to increase cheese yield • Managing cows on a poor milk yield • Transition management • Fertility and early lactation management	Camelton	Early Nov	SRUC
Collection of Specialist Benefit-making data, Cost of Production	• One to one interviews	On Farm	July Oct	SRUC
Energy Feedback on Cost of Production	• Analysis of benchmarking information	Camelton	Late Nov	SRUC
Comparison Farm Visits	• Led by AHDB specialists, Tom Davies	Camelton	Jan/Jan	AHDB Dairy
Second Nutrition Meeting	• Feedback from first Nutrition Meeting • Cheese Yield Review	Camelton	Jan	AHDB Dairy
Cost of Production Review Meeting	• Feedback from the meeting	Camelton	Feb	SRUC
Finance	• Finance • Subsidies	Camelton	March	AHDB Dairy
Health	• Health	Camelton	March	AHDB Dairy
Soils and Grass		Camelton	April	AHDB Dairy

The workshops marked in green are supported by the Prince's Dairy Initiative. For further info, contact: Sharon Laidler, Scotland Extension Officer, AHDB Dairy T: 01787 704191 E: Sharon.Laidler@ahdb.org.uk

The workshops marked in blue are supported by the Scottish Funding Council. For further info, contact: David A. Kellie, Senior Dairy Consultant, SRUC T: 01747 872024 E: David.Kellie@scot.nhs.uk
John Forster, Agricultural Consultant, SRUC T: 01188 353552 E: John.Forster@scot.nhs.uk

Dairy Events boost for Kintyre farmers

A number of free to attend workshops have been set up for Kintyre Dairy farmers to attend over the forthcoming winter period. These workshops are being delivered by the Prince's Dairy Initiative through AHDB Dairy, and the Scottish Funding Council through SRUC.

The Prince's Dairy Initiative, launched in 2012, is a dairy sector-led project to improve the resilience of the UK dairy supply chain by helping to secure a viable future for a diverse range of farms. It is delivered by a collaborative industry Steering Group and Working Group managed The Prince's Countryside Fund, in partnership with AHDB Dairy (previously DairyCo). The project has brought together the dairy sector to take practical action to support the sustainability of a diverse British dairy industry.

Through a package of business advice and support it aims to improve confidence and increase efficiencies within a group of farmers identified as vulnerable and likely to cease being a dairy farmer.

The Prince's Dairy Initiative's current sponsors from across the dairy industry include AB Agri, Anglia Farmers, Arla, Credion, Dairy Crest, Dugdale Nutrition, Fayrefields Foods, First Milk, For Farmers, Glanbia Cheese, Meadow Foods, Medina Dairy, Mole Valley Farmers, Müller-Wiseman, OMSCO, Wensleydale Creameries, Wyke Farms and Volac.

SAOS to hold session at SAYFC 'Cultivating Futures' Conference

SAOS is delighted to be running an interactive session as part of the SAYFC Agri Affairs Conference in Dundee in November.

The conference, to be held over the weekend of 20 - 22 November, will focus on opportunities for young people and will feature a farm visit to Peel Farm, Kirriemuir – which has developed and diversified into an enterprise including beef, sheep, vegetables, a farm shop, retail and catering.

There is a choice of further farm visits (dairy, veg or sheep), and other highlights include talks from industry experts, an interactive workshop, choice of breakout sessions and business and skills advice. Of course the conference also offers a great opportunity for networking.

The event promises to be very popular and highly beneficial for attendees. For further details and to book a place, go to:

<http://www.sayfc.org/events/2015-11-20/agri-and-rural-affairs-conference>



UK Craft Distillers' Conference



**SCDA AGM, Gala Dinner and Conference
Atholl Palace, Pitlochry, Perthshire**

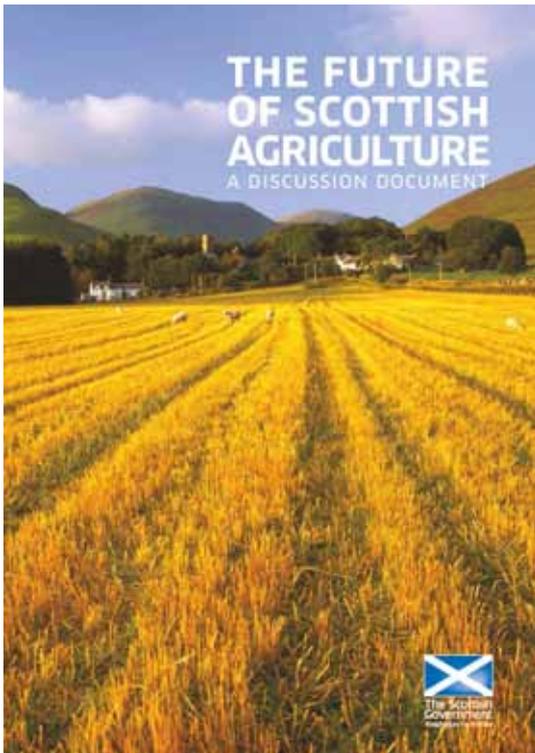
Monday 5 October at 15:30 - Tuesday 6 October at 16:30

The first UK Craft Distillers Conference will bring together distillers, suppliers and enthusiasts and feature a number of in-depth and authoritative talks and workshops led by key industry and academic bodies, with many running in parallel to allow you to tailor your conference experience to meet your specific interests. In the dedicated exhibition area, leading industry suppliers will be displaying their goods and services for 'hands on' inspection.

The main conference will be preceded by a gala dinner, where the results of the first UK Craft Spirits Competition will be announced. Both dinner and conference will be held at the Atholl Palace Hotel in Pitlochry, in the heart of Highland Perthshire and one of Scotland's key single malt-producing regions. There will be an opportunity for conference delegates to visit the Blair Athol Distillery before the conference.

For full details and to book your place, go to <http://scottishcraftdistillers.org/conference/>

Growth in Farm Co-operation Essential in Scottish Government's Vision



Richard Lochhead, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Food and Environment is currently inviting views on priorities for the future of Scottish agriculture, after the Scottish Government set out its "vision" for the industry in a comprehensive discussion document.

The Scottish Government identifies that "co-operation both vertically and horizontally increases the resilience of agri-food supply chains" and calls for more "collaboration amongst farmers (both informally and through co-operatives) to take advantage of economies of scale, share best practice, market produce and benefit from a stronger price-negotiating position". It also calls for "collaboration between farmers, processors and retailers to increase the resilience of the whole supply chain, with farmers benefitting from improved price security and transparency, shared risk management and feedback from retailers." Highland Grain is featured as an exemplar of farmer co-operation, performing valuable roles for its farmer members and for its malting and distilling customers.

According to SAOS Chief Executive, James Graham: "These aspects of the Scottish Government vision closely match those of the 50 co-op leaders who met in June to discuss the future of agricultural co-operation. They decided that co-operation will provide a route to markets that are more demanding, more volatile and more global. They noted that co-ops provide the links between primary production, food manufacturing and the supply chain to consumers, built on transparency and integrity that can be trusted. They also agreed that co-ops are supremely placed to facilitate innovation in farm production as conduits of research, technology and data services, rooted as they are, in member governance and rural communities. What's more, collectively with SAOS, they agreed to provide leadership to transform their role in the years ahead."

The Scottish Government publication *The Future of Scottish Agriculture* is available at: www.gov.scot.

Views on the vision can be sent to: agriculturevision@scotland.gsi.gov.uk.

The Future of Hill Farming – in your hands

Last minute bookings accepted from hill farmers!

This one and a half-day conference looking at the opportunities for hill farming in Scotland takes place on 30th Sept & 1st Oct 2015 in Oban.

The event will bring together hill farmers and crofters from across Scotland, along with policy makers and funders.

Delegate numbers for the event are extremely positive, but last minute bookings from farmers will be accepted. **Please contact Fergus Younger on 07771 966649 if you are a farmer or crofter and would like to attend.**

- **Wed 30th Sept 2015:** Half day of farm visits to include the Hill & Mountain Research Centre, Kirkton and Auchtertyre Farms, Crianlarich
- **Thurs 1st October 2015:** One-day Conference at Scottish Marine Institute, Dunstaffnage, Oban, to include speakers, trade stands and workshops covering a variety of topics – Next Generation, Technical Improvements, Marketing, Farm Woodland Management, Tourism and Public Benefits.

With returns from hill farming under pressure, the conference will be looking at the future of this important sector of Scottish agriculture and will be joined by policy makers and funders to explore the opportunities for sheep and cattle producers operating on some of Scotland's more remote and challenging conditions.

The conference opens with a half day of farm visits including the Hill & Mountain Research Centre at Kirkton and Auchtertyre Farms near Crianlarich. This will be followed by a Conference dinner to be held in the Argyllshire Gathering Halls in Oban.

The second day will be held at the Scottish Marine Institute, Dunstaffnage, Oban. Speakers will include Jonnie Hall, NFU Scotland Director of Policy, who will outline what the changes to future support arrangements may mean for hill farmers.

Fergus Younger of SAOS, who is also the Argyll Area Agricultural Strategy Development Manager, commented: "This field visit and conference will highlight some of the challenges faced by hill farmers and crofters, and give everyone involved the opportunity to discuss and identify a sustainable way forward for hill farming, recognising the benefits that active hill farming can deliver. In order to achieve this, the process needs to be led by the farmers and crofters themselves and we really need them to come along and get involved."

NFU Scotland Director of Policy, Jonnie Hall, added: "Hill farming is not simply another agricultural commodity. More than any other sector, it is pivotal to landscapes, communities and the social fabric of these remote parts. That means we need to focus precious resources and funding on those actively farming in these parts and give them the confidence to continue."



Farmers offered help to find new employees

Employers and potential employees within the Scottish agriculture industry should find it easier to get in touch with each other and learn about the benefits of Modern Apprenticeships, thanks to an initiative from Sector Skills Council, Lantra.

Supported by NFU Scotland and the Scottish Government, MA Connections provides a free and confidential service to farmers looking for new employees and to people seeking more information about careers in agriculture through a Modern Apprenticeship. By matching up jobs and job seekers in a single database, Lantra aims to save farmers and trainees time and effort.

Information about the service is available at www.lantra.co.uk/MA-Connections and covers all aspects of Modern Apprenticeships, including work-based learning, how training is delivered, and what's expected of employer and employee.

Modern Apprentices are employees who are paid a wage and learn from the skills and experience of people around them while gaining skills and working towards a nationally recognised Scottish Vocational Qualification. Employers, employees and training providers work together in partnership and Modern Apprenticeships typically take from one to three years to complete.

Training takes place through Borders College, SRUC, Orkney College UHI and Train Shetland in Scotland, and helps the employees to get a wider understanding of their job.

Richard Lochhead, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Food and the Environment, said: "The importance for young people to see agriculture as a rewarding, fulfilling career is unquestionable. A vibrant Scottish farming industry will only be secured by attracting young talented entrepreneurs."

"But opportunities need to exist. Modern Apprenticeships play a big part in the Scottish Government's pledge to support youth employment and I welcome this initiative from Lantra and its partners as a means to promote awareness, understanding and uptake of Modern Apprenticeships in agriculture."

The first phase of MA Connections will focus on Modern Apprenticeships in Agriculture, and may be expanded to include other land-based and aquaculture industries in the future.

Lantra also plans to pilot a multi-employer Modern Apprenticeship scheme enabling apprentices to gain hands-on work experience across different farms, helping them to gain wider industry experience to meet the needs of their college assessments.

To find out more about MA Connections call 01738 646762 or visit

www.lantra.co.uk/MA-Connections

Monitor Farmer encourages others to take part in scheme

In July, the Milne family of Demperstone Farm, Auchtermuchty, played host to an open day to help spread the word about the success of their arable Monitor Farm. Danny and Alison embarked on a 'life changing' move to join the monitor farm initiative, funded by AHDB and the Scottish Government at the end of 2013, and say they have not looked back since.

The day provided an opportunity for the project management group of farmers to highlight the work undertaken at the 550 acre arable unity over the last two years. Members of the management group led groups around a number of stations on the farm. These were focussed on succession planning, business benchmarking, soil resilience, crop establishment, crop nutrition and agronomy. Many of these provided a great deal of debate and discussion, probably most obvious in the succession session, where Linda Tinson of Ledingham Chalmers was on hand to provide valuable advice and Andrew Aitken, of the management group who farms at Percival in Buckhaven, gave a frank and in-depth case study of his own farm's succession issues.

The event was free and open to all, and provided a great opportunity to find out more about the practices implemented at Demperston, many of which are useful for all types of farms. Alison Milne commented: "The open day was an opportunity for us to welcome both old and new faces along to Demperston, to discuss our progress to date and our plans for the future. The Monitor Farm has, so far, covered a range of topics and the open day gave us the opportunity to take stock and gather feedback on suggested useful topics for future meetings.

"It has been a fantastic opportunity for us to look closely at our business and challenge ourselves, and we have been fortunate to have an excellent group of local farmers contributing to meetings and to our management group. We look forward to what the next eighteen months will bring and hope to see more new faces along the way, it is open to everyone and we would love to have you involved."

Stephen Young of SAOS, who facilitates the group, added: "A good range of people attend this Monitor Farm and everyone seems to have gained something from the experience. The point of the day was to try to encourage others who haven't attended a Monitor Farm before to see that everyone can benefit from the experiences and knowledge of others. I'm sure everyone involved would recommend it as a way of making improvements to your business".



Thanks to all who sponsored the SAOS teams in the Great Glen Challenge!

Both SAOS teams put in a fantastic effort to take part in the Great Glen Challenge at the end of August – so far raising a whopping £2896.25 for the RSABI coffers.

Despite having injured his knee, SAOS' George Noble came 4th overall in the running section, with Lynne Ferguson from Tayforth coming in a respectable 16th. Emma Patterson Taylor and Stephen Young from SAOS were kayaking and managed to avoid falling into the Loch, but still got drenched by a downpour as they were due to start!

Rona Sutherland and Anna Robertson, also both SAOS, completed the walk and observation test – which they reported was a lot harder than they'd anticipated – items to find included a safety pin on a leaf!!

Andy Peddie of Tay Forth Machinery Ring and John Taylor (Scottish Pig Producers) eventually completed the mountain biking section after taking a 'slight' 6km detour up a hill! And finally Dougie Watson of SAOS deserves a special mention for the driving/logistics to get both teams from A-B!

Well done to all members of both teams, and particular thanks to Lynne, John and Andy from our member co-ops who joined the teams in a fine example of co-operation.

It sounds like a great time was had by all who took part and thanks to everyone who sponsored the teams, contributing to such a great cause.