



## Agriculture Strategy Champions Call for More Collaboration

The Scottish Government has published a discussion document produced by the four 'Agricultural Champions' who were appointed by Cabinet Secretary Fergus Ewing to advise on future agriculture strategy. Included in the six strategic themes that are identified, is a clear and unequivocal call for more collaboration amongst farmers and within their supply chains.

The Champions state: "We have discussed collaboration at length with our contributors and are struck by how many benefits it can bring: economies of scale in purchasing and selling; sharing of specialist machinery and staff; market information; risk management; logistics; branding and marketing," and they conclude: "We see great potential in encouraging greater use of collaboration and building on the excellent, if sometimes unrecognised, work of SAOS."

In discussing the strategic theme concerned with addressing "opportunities for careers in the rural sector", the Champions make special mention of Ringlink's internship scheme, currently targeted at schools in the co-op's trading area. The report notes that: "At present there is no pre-apprenticeship option for rural skills, but we believe this principle would be beneficial and should be worked up drawing on the lessons of the well-established internship programme run by Ringlink."

In response to the document, James Graham, SAOS Chief Executive said: "I enjoyed participating in one of the Champions' working groups, as did Jim Booth, and naturally I'm very pleased that in their discussion paper they have taken full account of all the evidence that I, and several others, contributed. We already have some excellent exemplar farmer co-ops and collaborative supply chains in Scotland, and Ringlink stands out for their work in reaching out to school leavers, but there's absolutely no doubt that there is great potential for more, right across Scotland."

James continued: "It is also valuable that the Champions' conclusions align closely with Ambition 2030, the strategy adopted by the Scotland Food & Drink Partnership for industry growth, launched earlier in 2017. Facilitating more supply chain collaboration is one of its 'Pillars of Growth' and the SAOS team is already hard at work with co-ops and supply chains on some ambitious initiatives."

James concludes: "Whilst we much appreciate the Champions' endorsement of SAOS' development activities, our work is, of course, enabled by a range of partners and not least by our member co-ops, the Scottish Government, and Scotland Food & Drink."

The four Agriculture Champions are Archie Gibson, Henry Graham, John Kinnaird and Marion MacCormick. The document 'An Interim Discussion Document from the Government's Agriculture Champions setting out the six strategic themes can be accessed on line at [www.gov.scot/Resource/0052/00527778.pdf](http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0052/00527778.pdf). The Scottish Government invites comments on the conclusions by 29 December 2017 to be sent to [Champions-of-Agriculture@gov.scot](mailto:Champions-of-Agriculture@gov.scot).

### SAOS January Conference To Discuss Value of Collaboration

The SAOS conference on 25th January 2018 will up the theme of value through collaboration with presentations from two professors with deep expertise on this topic. **Professor Daniel Côté**, University of Montreal, will address the role of co-ops. Daniel participated in our 2005 conference and influenced the emphasis of our co-op development work. **Professor Jan Godsell**, University of Warwick, will deal with value across chain participants, and give her insights into successful supply chain design and fair value allocation.

### National Council of Rural Advisers (NCRA) Reports

The NCRA published its initial report in late November on 'Potential Implications for Rural Scotland of the United Kingdom Leaving the European Union', taking into consideration all aspects of the rural economy. The report does not aim to be exhaustive, but to be "a snapshot of rural Scotland and those aspects of rural that we (NCRA) think are key to informing the Scottish Government in its discussions with the UK on Brexit." The report sets out issues under the headings of labour and skills, trade, funding, legislation and standards. It is available on line at [www.gov.scot/Resource/0052/00528196.pdf](http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0052/00528196.pdf).

## Cabinet Secretary to Address SAOS Conference

The SAOS conference 2018 programme and registration form are enclosed with this SAOS Update. We're delighted that Fergus Ewing, Cabinet Secretary for the Rural Economy and Connectivity, has found the time to attend our conference with its theme of 'Opportunities for Value Through Collaboration'. Mr Ewing will address delegates during our afternoon session and there will also be an opportunity for the audience to pose questions of the Cabinet Secretary.

In addition to our keynote presentations from **Professors Daniel Côté (Co-creating Value Through Co-operation Strategy)** and **Janet Godsell (Designing Fairer Collaborative Supply Chains)**, we have also now firmed up our panel session guests. We have a great spread of knowledge and experience within the panel which should ensure the usual healthy debate continues during this popular session. Rory Christie, Chairman of the Milk Suppliers Association; Andy McGowan, Managing Director of Scottish Pig Producers; Denis Overton, Vice Chairman of Scotland Food & Drink; and James Graham, SAOS Chief Executive, form this year's panel and after each gives a short presentation they will be taking questions as a group from the floor.

We hope you can join us at Dunblane Hydro on 25th January please book early to avoid disappointment! This year we're offering a number of free 'Next Generation' places for co-op staff aged under 40 who are first time conference attendees. Please contact [jennifer.grant@saos.coop](mailto:jennifer.grant@saos.coop)

## GDPR – Time to Prepare

The new EU General Data Protection Regulation will take effect from 25th May 2018. The UK has confirmed that the legislation will be adopted in full in UK law, regardless of Brexit outcomes, so it is necessary for all businesses to be prepared.

The Information Commissioners Office (ICO) provides an overview of the new law, pointing out the main differences from the current Data Protection Act. The ICO advises: "The GDPR places greater emphasis on the documentation that data controllers must keep to demonstrate their accountability."

"Compliance with all the areas of the Regulation will require organisations to review their approach to governance and how they manage data protection as a corporate issue. It is essential to plan your approach to GDPR compliance now and to gain 'buy in' from key people in your organisation. You may need, for example, to put new procedures in place to deal with the GDPR's new transparency and individuals' rights provisions. In a large or complex business this could have significant budgetary, IT, personnel, governance and communications implications." ICO's introduction and resources related to GDPR can be found at: [www.ico.org.uk](http://www.ico.org.uk)

## Quality Pork Re-opens Brechin Plant

Quality Pork Ltd (QPL) has re-opened its Brechin abattoir after an extensive reconstruction programme following the major fire there during the summer.

The site, officially launched in 2016 following a £10m redevelopment, was closed after the incident in early August. Operations restarted in mid November with a reduced throughput with a view to ramping up to levels before the fire.

QPL, the collaboration between Scottish Pig Producers, Scotlean and Tulip Ltd, developed the modern processing facility which is owned by farmer member suppliers in Scotland and operated on their behalf by a Board made up from the three founding organisations.

An extensive programme (right) of building, repair and cleaning works essential to restoring operations at the site has been undertaken to ensure the site continues to uphold the highest standards of food safety and animal welfare. While production has now recommenced, work continues on replacement of office and amenities for the staff.

During the reconstruction programme, QPL worked closely with QMS, Scottish Government, industry organisations and their customers in order to maintain the Scottish pig supply chain. QMS granted a temporary derogation which allowed pigs eligible for the Specially Selected Pork brand, which would have been slaughtered at Brechin, to be processed at another Tulip site specifically approved and regularly monitored by QMS representatives. QPL staff were relocated to Tulip Ltd sites in England to maintain employment and skills - all have been retained and have now returned to Brechin.

QPL Chairman Roderic Bruce, said: "The extensive programme which has been undertaken to get this critically important site back up and running has been a truly collaborative effort. Not only has there been huge focus on getting the site back into shape, there has been a big operation in place to ensure the impact on Scottish pig producers has been minimal."

"It's great to be back in business and I would like to thank the QPL team, Tulip Ltd, QMS, Scottish Government, farmers, suppliers and hauliers for the great efforts and commitment that has been required in order to maintain supply of Scottish pigs."

Fergus Ewing, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity commented: "The Scottish Government welcomes the reopening of the Brechin abattoir following closure in August and looks forward to continuing to work with the Scottish pig industry to help maintain the supply of quality pork."

Pictured bottom right, just before the re-opening of the plant, is the SAOS North Managers' Forum group who held their most recent meeting at the site. Left to right: Jim Booth, SAOS; John Cannon, General Manager of Quality Pork Ltd; John Gregor, ANM; Mark Clark, Grampian Growers; Robin Barron, East of Scotland Farmers; and Graham Bruce, Ringlink.



## Ring Collaboration Sees More Straw Orkney-bound by Sea

Friday 13th October was lucky for some as that was the day that the MV Burhou-1 sailed for Orkney from the Invergordon port with a full cargo of straw aboard!

This is the second consecutive year that the Orkney Business Ring and HBS Ring Ltd, based just outside Inverness, have worked together to supply straw to farmers and crofters on Westray.

As everyone will know, straw is neither a cheap nor readily-found this season. This year's harvest was far from easy and was very testing for both arable and livestock farmers alike.

Alan McLean, HBS Manager, commented: "Thanks to the supplier farmers in Easter Ross, Martin Gill the Black Isle based haulier, Ross Forsyth on the telescopic loader in the dock and the Cromarty Firth Port Authority for allowing the use of their facility and of course the MV Burhou owners and crew."



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**Gail Robertson of Ringlink updates us on the ring's Land-based Pre-Apprenticeship scheme:**

"Since 2013 to date, the Ringlink Internship programme has gone from strength to strength and we are proud that it has recently become accredited by Scottish Rural College (SRUC) as the Land-based Pre-Apprenticeship (SCQF level 4).

The original class of 2017 saw 15 young people offered placements with mentor businesses across Angus, Moray, Perthshire and Aberdeenshire. To-date 13 candidates remain in work with their mentors, with the programme coming to a close on the 5th January 2018.

The programme is an industry-recognised progression route into the land-based sector and continues to prove highly successful in attracting young people into the sector, whether from an agricultural or non-agricultural background alike.

Applications for the Land-based Pre-Apprenticeship 2018 are now open and we look forward to welcoming the next group of recruits.

It is vital that we continue to encourage and invest in the next generation to ensure that we have sufficient skilled resources to meet the future demand of the industry. We will therefore continue in our efforts to secure mainstream funding for the pre-apprenticeship as we endeavour to achieve a recognised and affordable pathway into the rural industry.

Thank you to all mentor businesses who have supported the programme thus far and urge you all to think about whether you can offer a young person the opportunity of a six month work placement within your business. We recognise that 'Mentors are the skill experts of today but our pre-apprentices will be the skill experts of tomorrow'.

Finally, our utmost gratitude goes to our funders who remain absolutely critical to the programme and allow us to deliver such an important project. The 2017 funders are: Mains of Loirston Charitable Trust, Royal Northern Agricultural Society, AHDB Cereals & Oilseeds, AgriScot, GPH Builders Merchants and Campbell Dallas."

For further details of the pre-apprenticeship programme or to express an interest in becoming a Mentor, please contact: [gail@ringlinkscotland.co.uk](mailto:gail@ringlinkscotland.co.uk) or 01561 377790 Full info at: [www.ringlinkscotland.co.uk/pre-apprenticeship](http://www.ringlinkscotland.co.uk/pre-apprenticeship)

## Big Year for Borders Machinery Ring

At BMR's AGM in November, Chairman, Guy Lee, reflected on a landmark year for the ring, having celebrated their 30th anniversary, as well as a move to new offices in Earlston. He described these as a "modern facility allowing us to host more in house training and member meetings. It makes BMR more visible and accessible to the membership. It is a great asset for the business. We have had very positive feedback from members who came to the official opening and who have visited since. Two rural businesses are now renting three rooms on 1st floor with two rooms still available. The office building, car park and paddock at rear were purchased for £123,000, the renovations totalled £130,000 which gives a total cost of £253,000. There has been no need to borrow as the whole project was financed from the balance sheet built up over the years but still leaving a comfortable reserve.

Turning to the financial performance for the year ending 30th April, Guy told members "turnover has increased by £250,000 to almost £6 million. There has been increased activity in all areas from the core work of member to member contracting, to the supply of labour, provision of utilities, and general material supplies from fertiliser to concrete blocks. Net profit was lower at £18,000 but this was to be expected with one off costs for the new office as we were effectively using two buildings for the majority of the year."

Ring members now total 925 and Guy continued "From a farming member's point of view - financially I think 2017 will go down as a good year. On the arable side, yields were good, quality held up and prices were above last year, stock prices have also been an improvement. But looking at things from a day to day point of view, it will be remembered for being an extremely difficult and frustrating harvest period. The weather never improved and September was very dull and wet. The net result is straw is in very short supply, autumn crops were sown late or not at all, and the prospect for 2018 harvest does not look so promising." He closed by thanking the ring's staff and his fellow directors.

## AGM Marks Ten Years of Scotland Food & Drink

St Andrew's night this year coincided with a major milestone for Scotland Food & Drink. Coupled with their AGM was a celebration of the organisation's 10th anniversary and around 450 guests gathered at the National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh to mark the occasion.

David Kilshaw, Chairman, told guests: "Ours is a unique way of working. It is forged on a belief in collaborative working that is now an international model to follow. We are leading the way in Scotland – humble, for sure, about how much we have achieved – and excited by how much more we can do. We are proud that we have forged our own path, one that is now being followed by others."

He reflected: "I did wonder myself back in those formative days if we could achieve a membership of 400 businesses at the heart of the organisation, as we have now. That we would work as a seamless partner with SDI and our industry partners to recruit a global team of trade specialists based in 11 cities around the world. That 150 UK and international buyers would gather in Gleneagles three weeks ago for 2500 meetings with 140 of our leading companies to secure £30-40M of new business in 48 hours."

"Ten years ago there was a genuine question as to whether farming, fishing, food and drink should be a priority sector for Scotland. That question has been answered emphatically. In the last ten years, since we all came together to work on a common purpose to grow the value and reputation of our industry, food and drink has become the fastest growing sector in Scotland and its biggest employer. Our food manufacturing sector has grown at twice the pace of the rest of the UK.

But far more valuable than all that is the culture of collaboration and partnership which we stand for and that our industry now represents... I genuinely believe we are making Scotland the best place in the world to run a food and drink business... Thank you to every single one of you for your ongoing support."



## It's Great to Innovate! Introducing the new Rural Innovation Support Service

Have you ever had a great idea that you think could make your business better, but don't know how to make this a reality?

Rural businesses in Scotland can now get the helping hand they need to develop their innovative ideas.

The new Rural Innovation Support Service (RISS) is run by experts from SAOS, Scotland Food & Drink, and Soil Association Scotland, and will get groups together to support the exploration of innovative ideas.

The RISS experts will work closely with groups, taking a wider look at the ideas, how to test them, and how to make them a reality. They will bring in wider expertise, which could include researchers, processing or other supply chain businesses, or anyone else with an interest. There is no limit to the innovative ideas that can be explored, as long as they are practical and sustainable.

So why don't you get in touch with SAOS with your bright idea? Contact: [george.noble@saos.coop](mailto:george.noble@saos.coop)

## Connect Local Showcasing Scotland Regional Events

The Showcasing Scotland regional events programme has been developed in response to growing demand for local products in local markets. The programme will help grow local and regional sales by bringing together regional buyers, producers and suppliers for a series of one-day meet the buyer events.

For buyers, Showcasing Scotland regional events will make introductions as easy as possible through the successful 'speed-dating' style of event, exposing them to the breadth of quality food and drink products each region has to offer.

For suppliers, Showcasing Scotland regional events will provide the opportunity to develop commercial capability through a Supplier Development Programme and give the chance to meet a range of buyers who are actively looking for local products.

For more info on Connect Local and how it could help your business, go to: [www.connectlocal.scot](http://www.connectlocal.scot)

Details for the regional showcases are as follows:

Region	Location	Date
West	Hampden Park, Glasgow	7th March 2018
Tayside	Dundee	May 2018
Highlands & Islands	Inverness	September 2018
East	Edinburgh	February 2019
North East	Aberdeen	May 2019
Highlands & Islands	Location TBA	Jun 2019

## New Business Development Manager Appointments for SAOS

We are delighted to announce that our recruitment for the new position of Business Development Manager in the Autumn has seen us successfully appoint not one but two candidates to the role. We have worked with Amanda Brown and Helen Glass at various times in recent years and very much look forward to welcoming them to SAOS in February.

We are confident that the knowledge, experience and skills they add to our team will build on SAOS' capabilities as well as capacity. With the many challenges and opportunities ahead for our industry these appointments will ensure we are even better equipped to make a full contribution to addressing them.



Everyone at SAOS would like to wish all our readers a very merry Christmas and a happy, healthy and prosperous New Year!

If you have anything to contribute towards future editions of SAOS Update, please contact: [jennifer.grant@saos.coop](mailto:jennifer.grant@saos.coop)



The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development: Europe investing in rural areas

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