

Farming for the future

One of the big wins from Brexit can be a new agrarian revolution in the UK. We should develop policies to rebuild our self sufficiency in temperate food, as we virtually enjoyed before joining the Common Agricultural Policy. We should also look at other ways of increasing the use we make of our farmland to increase farm incomes.

Cutting food miles should be part of the aim. Investing in better farming methods should be the means of achieving the improvements. UK farms could do with more capital and successful farmers need access to more land to farm.

The UK has not invested as much in market gardening to produce vegetables and salads in the way the Netherlands has done. Our climates are very similar, but the Netherlands have gone much further in putting in glass houses and other protective systems to extend growing seasons and raise crop output.

We need improved funding of tenant and farm owner capital from both the commercial sector and from government as part of its financial support. In many cases forward contracts from leading retailers will make it possible to finance this type of expansion.

In the dairy sector more joint working with the leading food manufacturers and retailers could create more milk demand for conversion to value added products like cheese and yoghurt.

Landowners and tenant farmers can also add other incomes from making land available for solar arrays, battery storage and other green energy activities. We also need to stimulate more tree planting. Our growing conditions are often better than Scandinavia and Canada yet we import most of our wood.

With a massive £20 bn food deficit with huge EU there is plenty of scope for new farming expansion here at home.