

Paper from Young Farmers' Clubs of Wales

Rural Enterprise Scheme - Cynllun Menter Gwledig

INTRODUCTION:

1999 saw the Rural Enterprise Scheme enter the second term of financial support, is now in the fourth year of existence.

Yet again the agriculture industry is faced with great adversity, this increases the urgency to ensure that the YFC is there to offer support and assistance to its members relating to business issues and their choices for their futures.

FUNDING AND SUPPORT:

The project is part financed and supported by the following:

- The European Agriculture Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF)
- Farming and Rural Conservation Agency (FRCA)
- Welsh Development Agency (WDA)
- National Westminster Bank

GRANTS AWARDED:

Following an interim review, the total grant fund of £6000 was allocated as follows:

£100 available to the first thirty participants to help them develop their business plans, this allocation may be changed slightly for 2001 - £200 to the first 15 participants.

At a Wales level, £1500* is awarded as the main grant to the most promising business idea (with £250 to the winning applicant's County Federation to encourage greater co-operation in promoting the scheme).

Two further grants of £750* and £500* are also awarded to the runners up. The main grants are awarded at the Royal Welsh Winter Fair in December 5th 2000.

All individuals participating also receive a special financial package sponsored by Nat West (*if desired*)

** So as to ensure that the grants are invested in the businesses, contact is maintained with the participants to see the business develop.*

GUIDELINES:

The scheme is open to all young farmer members in Wales, past and present, between 18 and 31 years of age. Previous winners of any YFC competition are also eligible to apply. Participants can be individuals or groups.

As in '97 and '98 and '99 any business ideas were welcomed, with the emphasis on the development of the following business sectors:

- Developing markets for local food produce
- Farm tourism
- Off-farm business and employment
- New on farm technical ideas
- Businesses that help preserve and profit the environment
- Group buying of farm inputs

EVALUATION:

Scheme's Strengths:

- Offers participants a secure support structure for them to explore ideas
- Offers the opportunity for members to gain skills and the confidence to approach advice agencies therefore improving communication skills
- The Scheme hopefully will inspire members taking part to venture and develop greater business ideas in the future
- Strong network exists to help the members including Menter a Busnes, Business Connect, and Prince's Trust – Business all supporting the Scheme along with the sponsors.

Scheme's Weaknesses:

- The Scheme depends on a contact being made in some way with Members who have business ideas in order to be able to provide the support and advice needed
- Business advice network not always consistent, although beginning to work together to support the Scheme in a coherent way
- More support needed as a business is developed, possibly follow up calls by Business advice network or mentoring by individuals who are successful in business