

Holly Tree Farm - Cheshire



BACKGROUND

The couple moved into this tenant farm in 1989. With 33 acres of grass with a bit of arable, it was originally a starter farm for the local estate.

DIVERSIFICATION

With it being a smallholding, they immediately opened the farm shop, selling home produced food. Diversification provided the additional income for a family to survive.

No support was available at the time (1989)

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

They decided to concentrate on home grown produce. Approximately 85% of their produce is home grown. They sell lamb, home produced rare breeds meat, home grown vegetables, local wines and beers. They slaughter, process and pack geese and turkeys on the premises and provide "hand raised pies".



Open all year round, they have approximately 300-400 visitors per week with numbers peaking to 2,500 to 3,000 in the two days before Christmas. Ninety-nine percent of farm income is generated through the farm shop.

Turnover has increased in the past 12 months and they are now at the level they were before being knocked back by FMD when they were closed for 3½

months with no income.

They are registered butchers and slaughterers and are members of the Rare Breeds Accredited Association and the Farm Retail Association.

Their main market is local people from a 40 mile radius including North Manchester, Liverpool and Derbyshire. There is no definite split between age, gender or background.



They also supply a few other farm shops with their rare breeds meat as well as local boar, ostrich and organic food.

USE OF LOCAL PRODUCE

They use local food as a distinctive feature. They were the first to win the "Made in Cheshire" awards. All their signs and advertising feature "Home Produced". They hope to increase their use of local

produce in the future.

They don't promote local crafts at present but may diversify into a small craft type barn in the future.

MARKETING

Marketing activity includes distributing questionnaires at Farmers' markets. They keep a database and all customers receive a newsletter. Their leaflets have a descriptive slant rather than prices as they vary too much. They are only interested in free advertising.

She also does talks as "the Goose Woman" to local WI groups entitled "Game for a goose" which serves to promote the business.



They received training in 2003 in health & safety and food hygiene for all staff of which there are three part time and two full time.

FUTURE PLANS

They are members of North West Farm Foods, the Rare Breeds Association, the Farm Retail Association, Made in Cheshire and the NFU. Future plans include further promotion and improvement of the existing business and the

possibility of a craft barn.

Major issues include a perception that there is a lack of understanding among public bodies towards farmers and their needs. They also feel that busy farmers would like a single initial point of contact where they can find out exactly which grants from which agencies are right for them.