

Rural Economy Strategy Review 2019

A high-level review of policies in the Rural Economy Strategy (RES) has been carried out.

All policies have been retained, as currently written.

Over 50% of Island's land surface is still maintained as a managed agricultural landscape.

The RES review has enabled focus on policy delivery and budget requirements; specifically -

1. Budget – the RES was budgeted in the last MTFP to end of 2019 so it has been necessary to review the budget and prepare a business case for the new Government Plan (GP). A modest budget increase has been proposed for 2020 to 2023, primarily to enhance support payments. Support payments will be increased progressively over the remainder of the term of this RES (2020 and 2021) – subject to adoption of the new GP.
2. Maintenance of Jersey Royal and Dairy sectors, which are recognised as mainstay of rural economy activity, with activity and initiatives implemented to support this over the remainder of the current RES – including sector specific industry engagement to inform the development of the next RES.
3. There will be a shift of focus for support payments towards reward for the delivery of environmental 'goods' over the next two years – and this policy shift is likely to be more pronounced in the next iteration of the RES post 2021.
4. The Organic Farming Action Plan (2014) has been revisited, allowing for increases in support to this sector to be increased for 2020 and 2021 (subject to approval of extra funding for the RES in the Government Plan). A revised OFAP will be developed over the next two years as part the revision of the RES for 2022.
5. Renewal of data collection procedures to better inform policy development and measure policy outcomes has been delivered. (Revised Agricultural Returns and analysis of LEAF audit process). This will enable more accurate analysis of land use (at individual field record level) which can inform adjustments to agricultural land use i.e. equine grazing, tree planting, establishment of new crops.
6. Current trends indicate a significant decline in the size of the agricultural workforce (especially the seasonal workforce); a decline in the diversity of crops produced (reduction in labour intensive vegetable production); a further decline in number of farm units coupled with increase in average size of remaining units; sustained demand for agricultural land with increased recognition of the requirement to 'rotate' crops or rest land to maintain or improve soil health.
7. Farm Jersey to be utilised more effectively as strategic partner to deliver services and consultation with industry and community to identify and manage challenges to the sustainability of rural businesses in the future.