

Limestone Country



YORKSHIRE DALES
National Park Authority





Economic Research

- Analysed the farm accounts for all project farms.
- Utilised farm models for different scenario analysis.
- Review of short and medium term policy implications for cattle farming in the uplands

Limestone
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ASKHAM BRYAN COLLEGE



Policy and market issues

- Recent years costs of production have outweighed market returns – shortfall met by direct subsidies.
- 2003 reform of Pillar I and II of the CAP, combined with broader socio-economic change with have significant impact on farm structure.
- Reduction of Single Payment year on year will place greater emphasis on improving market conditions.

Restructuring & Markets

- Many of the farms will not be economically viable by 2012 if they remain the same
- Many farms will restructure enterprises and move away from cattle to sheep
- Market prices are predicted to improve (world demand) but price rises will be too slow in coming to prevent farmers giving up cattle farming.
- A need to improve efficiency & cut costs (ie out wintering reducing reliance on feed)

Economic viability



- Average farm size is 357ha (but ranges from 200 - 1,1005ha)
- Livestock numbers.....
- Most of the land is classified as very poor by DEFRA in terms of agricultural quality
- 60-80% of gross margins is derived from subsidy and agri-environment payments



- Limestone Country Project farmers are making €25 - €160 gross margin per head (equivalents) more than when they were farming sheep.
- Can achieve between €0.5 and €2.0 kg/dw more for their cattle than main commodity price – but only when premium prices are obtained.
- In the absence of niche marketing the prices obtained are much less than commercial cattle or sheep

Limestone Country Beef

- Growing market in the UK for quality beef – valued for taste and structure of the meat
- Good environmental management can help in the promotion of local or farm brands
- Good premium prices can be obtained



Beef Producers Group

Formation of group – committed to working together to supply a potentially lucrative market to best advantage

- Production of marketing plan
- Development of brand criteria
- Review Options for marketing

Also identified that assistance was needed in two main areas:

- Selection of Stock to Market
- Sales co-ordination

Approach to marketing

- Farmers manage the land/cattle
- Environmentalists support the project and supply guidance.
- Fieldsmen check quality
- Marketing and sales people advise on options



Selling Criteria

- Environmental – simple and easy to follow – length of time spent on conservation grazing (Natura 2000) (last grazing season prior to slaughter), 50% of adult life on agri-environment land
- Finishing criteria – grass-fed only?
- Traceability - designated abattoirs, standard slaughter methods, approved sales channels, food labels to include passport numbers? Spot checks
- Quality – Fieldsman, hung for three weeks, feedback from cutters and butchers.

Options for selling

Three options considered:

1. Direct Consumer marketing – box schemes, farmers markets, mail order, farm gate etc
2. Selling to retail and wholesale – restaurants, butchers or food processors
3. Working with a larger retailer – regional supermarkets etc

Need to balance most lucrative markets and those which require the least input.

Direct sales

Issues:

- Environmental health –
licence to sell direct/store
- Consistency of product –
all beef sold under the
brand should be of the
same quality
- Labelling – uniform
standards
- Traceability
- Co-ordination of supply





Limestone Country

Traditional Beef

Limestone Country Beef is an environmentally friendly, high quality, natural product, full of taste and flavour.

Locally produced from traditionally-bred beef cattle which are grazed on high limestone pastures and herb-rich meadows.



Lacey

Mr James Coughlin



Bethal Boulton

Neil Houghton



Wesley Black

Richard Povey

The Limestone Country Project is an agri-environmental scheme set-up and run by the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority and English Nature. The scheme aims to preserve and enhance the wonderful diversity of plant species and other wildlife in one of our nation's most important limestone landscapes.



Blue Green

Bill Watters



Lacey

John & Anthony Dean

Limestone Country Beef comes from these traditionally-bred beef cattle, from a small number of farms, in between Grassington, Malham and Ingleton. The cattle are reared naturally for nearly 2 1/2 years, twice as long as most beef cattle today. The beef is then hung for at least 21 days before it is ready for the table. It's because of how the cattle have been reared and how the beef is matured, that gives this unique product its great flavour and taste, which will make you want to come back for more.



Wesley Black

James Hall

Because upland cattle have declined over the past 50 years due to more specialised sheep farming the growth of the more rank grasses has been significant. Reintroducing hardy breeds of cattle, which will thrive on the more rank vegetation, will enable the diversity of plant species to recover and flourish for us all to enjoy for many more years to come.

Secretary: Neil Haselme
Telephone: 01729 830 320
E-mail: neil@malhamdale.com



Bethal Boulton

Tom Boothman



Lacey

Michael Dunlop

Selling into retail and wholesale

Restaurants – Chefs need to balance quality, price and ease of purchase. Generally only buy the cuts they required which are often the best cuts

Retail butchers – Many turning to niche products to compete – also local selling.

Food processors – can be useful way of using poorer cuts

What are we trying to sell?

- Growing interest in products with strong local provenance, high standards of production and beneficial to environment
- Quality product
- Premium prices
- A local story







Healthiness and quality of meat

- DEFRA/Bristol University work
- To identify the role of unimproved biodiverse pastures and traditional breeds in achieving healthiness and quality in beef
- Meat quality – cattle reared on biodiverse vs species-poor pastures, also native vs more commercial breeds
- Omega-3 fatty acids, linoleic acid and vitamin E
- Eating quality – taste panel, consumer panel & butchers

Healthiness and quality of meat

- Initial results suggest better taste and texture in native breeds
- Early indications that Grass-fed cattle produces higher ratio of polyunsaturated to saturated fats and more anti-oxidant
- Still awaiting further analysis, including those for improved vs biodiverse grasslands



Belted Galloway versus Charolais X

$n = 4$

8 point category scales.

	Galloway	Charolais	
Texture	5.1	3.2	***
Juiciness	5.3	5.0	*
Beef flavour	4.3	3.4	***
Abnormal flavour	3.3	4.7	***

Limestone Country Beef

- Limestone Country Beef Producer Group
- Launch of the Beef brand
- The Limestone Country trail
- Using local markets – butchers, restaurants, box schemes etc



Problems

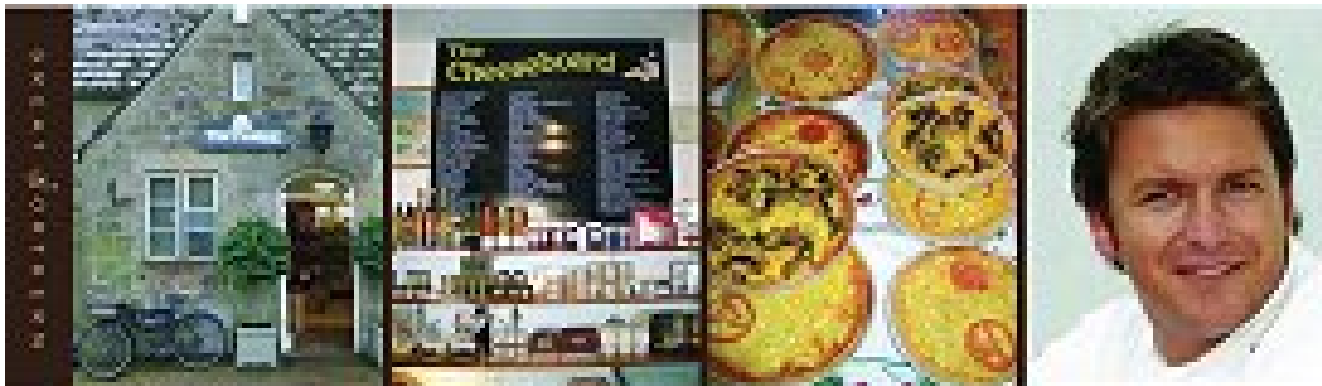
- Finishing beef?
- 30 months rule?
- Long-term Co-operation?



PR and press

- Large press coverage of the project (regional and national)
- Celebrity chefs and TV coverage





Deliciously Dales

REBECCA ROBERTS & SALLY SCANTLEBURY

FOREWORD BY JAMES MARTIN

FOOD TRAILS • LEADING PRODUCERS • TASTY RECIPES





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Thank you

