

Farming in London's Green Belt



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1 Executive Summary

This work was commissioned to consider what farmers in London were doing, how they were connecting into local supply chains, what they wanted to do in the future and what might be the barriers to them making these opportunities into realities. In addition the work had to consider what contribution these farmers might make to the LDA's desired outcomes.

To ensure that a large number of people could contribute to the report, a number of quantitative and qualitative research methods were employed, with over 250 people contributing in some way.

The number of farms is small when compared to the number of other types of businesses in the area but they are managing over 13,000 hectares of land. Their contribution to London's economic activity is also small, but their potential benefit to the environment is significant.

The further development of the London Food brand bringing together a range of existing work and facilitating new projects would bring a focus and cohesiveness which is currently lacking.

The key conclusions and recommendations based on the findings of the report can be summarised as follows:

- There is little engagement with local supply chains due to the dispersed nature of the farms and the seasonality of produce. However there is a willingness to engage more but this needs to be facilitated. A network of producers, customers and suppliers with central facilitation would help to achieve engagement.
- To increase access to land, further support needs to be channelled through existing projects in particular the Green Arc partnerships, Local authorities and other partners to assist with capital costs and health and safety issues.
- To capture wider environmental benefits, a new land management programme should be established, working with the Green Arc partnerships, to bring all environmental strands together under an integrated advice scheme for land managers covering both green and brown environmental issues.
- Among the actions required to improve the local supply chain, scale is cited as a barrier, along with a fractured supply chain. A feasibility study is required to assess the cost of pump priming new infrastructure to improve the supply chain especially for meat and meat products.
- The London Food brand to be supported by a range of promotional activities to improve consumer knowledge of the seasonality of produce and where they can get local produce.
- To help improve the access issues it is would be beneficial to increase the number of farmers who are taking part in the Safer Neighbourhoods scheme run through the Metropolitan Police.
- To encourage appropriate farm diversification in planning policy and to hold workshops covering planning issues for farmers and planners to promote best practice.

2 Introduction

The aim of this project was to provide the LDA and GLA with relevant factual information, to enable them to achieve their primary outcomes. These outcomes are also in line with London's regional charter and the Government's White Paper on Sustainable Food and Farming. The information has been collected through a combination of qualitative and quantitative market research along with desk research.

The outputs are as follows:

- In-depth understanding of the different farming systems taking place in each borough. To include elements of business output, production techniques (organic or conventional) sectors profitability, end market use.
- Spatial analysis for the impact of the current farming and food products being produced. Taking into account the distribution of the different farming activities within each region and the whole London area and the link with farmer markets and purchasers.
- An assessment to the future requirements of farming activities within the London region
- An in-depth database of food producers and products that could be accessed by food purchasers in London
- The potential to develop a London producer network
- Consideration of new and alternative production techniques and markets
- An assessment of the most common barriers experienced by the farm business that effect future viability and recommendations to over come the barriers
- The current position of crime related incidents and recommendations to take into account the future opportunities available to farmers.
- Recommendations for farm diversification options available to the different farms depending upon their location within the different boroughs.
- Demonstrate through case studies the opportunities to farmers to increase access and the quality of the landscape. Taking into account the effect that the Single Payment Scheme will have on farm practices and finances and, in Northeast London, the influence of the Green Arc project.
- To work with key partners within the area to examine the opportunities of fair trade import and organic conversion

By helping the LDA and GLA achieve these outputs then a decision can be made on if the following outcomes are achievable and in the best interest for the farmers and the London area. The aspirational outcomes are as follows:

- A doubling of certified organic food production by 2009
- A network of rights of way (ROW) to allow access to 25% of London farms by 2008
- A greater capacity for London farmers to sell food in London markets and 3% of Greater London Areas (GLA) food being purchased direct from London farmers by 2006
- Improve consumer knowledge of local suppliers/seasonal produce
- A Metropolitan Police farm support scheme in place by 2006
- A biennial conference on farming and planning issues

Following the inception meeting and subsequent steering group meetings the outputs were revised to take into consideration the actual number of farmers in the area.

3 Farming within London

For the purpose of this report, London farmers were considered to be those situated within the M25, an area that includes all 33 London boroughs. However, to provide a larger sample of farmers for whom proximity to London must be a major influence, those located in the next concentric 'layer' of boroughs and wards just outside the M25 have also been considered in relation to some of the conclusions made in this report.

Farmers within London are a comparatively small group when compared to other regional groups of farmers across the UK. In the 2003 Agricultural Census (most recent data available) there are 423 holdings. This represents a quarter of one percent of all holdings in England. The total land managed within these holdings equates to approximately 13,608 hectares. Of this area, about half (6,865ha) is rented, the remainder being owner-occupied. The contribution the farming activity makes to London's economy, excluding income from diversified activity, is likely to be less than £8million at today's prices.

The farming activity carried out by these farmers is representative of that found throughout England (see appendix 1 for the full census data). There are farms ranging in size from 0-20ha to those larger than 200ha (although this size of farm tends to have its land outside the M25 corridor). The type of farming activity is variable although the majority of the farms have permanent pasture and land used for winter cereals. Although the number of farms with livestock is lower than might be expected and the number of farms with sheep is especially small, there is a reasonable range of horticultural crops grown including field-scale vegetables. Location of the different types of crops reflects the soil types found across London (see appendix 2 for cropping maps).

Although farming is not an important industry sector with regards to economic impact on London's economy, by its very nature it is important environmentally as the farms cover a substantial area of London. However a different approach to managing this resource may be required as the general consensus from the farmers and others consulted is that some of the pressures on farmers in London are different from those on farmers in other parts of the UK. Therefore the actions required to change or improve aspects for the wider benefit may need to be different.

4 Methodology

To achieve the desired outputs for this report ADAS was required to obtain a cross section of views and opinions. To do this ADAS used a combination of research techniques and specialist personnel to draw conclusions from all the information collected.

4.1 Desk research

A range of information was collected and collated to set the scene for this work, utilising ADAS's library sources as well as Internet based information.

4.2 Postal survey

A key element of this work was to find out what the farmers were actually doing, whether they were considering change and whether they wanted to change, what might be helping them or be hindering them. A postal survey was chosen as the best

way to contact a large number of farmers. This method allowed respondents time to provide detailed data and give due consideration to the topics included in the survey. It was assumed that the farm manager or farm secretary would provide answers in the majority of cases. A database of names and addresses was collated from ADAS's own sources supplemented with names supplied by the NFU and other sources.

The questionnaire (appendix 3) was despatched on 7th February 2005 to 574 farmers. Some of the farmers' postal addresses were outside the M25 area, but all farmed at least some land within the area. A reminder letter was sent seven days later. 151 completed questionnaires were received by the survey close date of 3rd March. This represents a very good response rate of around 30%, allowing for the proportion of the original sample that had moved, gone out of business or had an incorrect address.

The questionnaire contained topics covering the following issues

- Information about the farm.
- Organic farming.
- Attitudes to CAP reform.
- Options for diversification and sustainability.
- Financial information.
- Impact of crime.

Several questions matched those used in the ADAS national Farmers Voice survey 2004, allowing comparison of the London sample with other regional groups. The subject matter was discussed with the LDA and it was felt that the cross section of questions would provide a great deal of useful information about the issues and activities currently taking place within these farms.

Appendix 4 contains the full results of the survey.

4.3 Focus groups

Following on from the survey, ADAS was keen to test some of the conclusions in more detail. Two focus groups were arranged; one in the South West of London and one in the North East of London, this split was purely for logistical reasons. The farmers that were invited were chosen from the postal survey and had indicated that they would be willing to assist with additional market research. They had also made interesting comments on the postal survey.

Sixteen farmers confirmed that they would be attending the meetings. The farmers were reminded of the meeting again, a day before they took place. Despite this only six farmers attended. While this was disappointing, a number of the farmers commented that had more been present they would not have been able to go through the issues in as much detail. The focus groups allowed ADAS to quantify the findings from the questionnaire and gain an in-depth understanding of the concerns of London farmers.

4.4 Telephone survey

As well as contacting the farmers within London, ADAS contacted a number of people not directly involved with farming but whose work impacted on farmers. These included private businesses and public sector organisations such as local authority planners, major landowners, policy makers and market organisers.

These people were key to this research as their comments helped provide an understanding of how farmers were seen by the London public and helped identify ways which the London public can access the rural facilities available to them. This work also looked at what schemes and initiatives are currently operational with London and how easy it would be for farmers or the London public to become involved in them. 30 different and diverse organisations were contacted for further discussion.

4.5 One to one interviews

A number of one to one interviews were also carried out to give further depth to the conclusions and to consider what solutions might be available to overcome the identified barriers to development.

4.6 Specialist advice

Once all the relevant information had been collected on the different issues and concerns raised by the farmers and others, ADAS were able to provide specialist advice on a wide range of the issues. Just two areas of specialist advice were outside ADAS' range of specialist skills; planning permission and crime. Therefore additional guidance on these was obtained from other sources.

5 Results

5.1 The current farming situation

Using the results of the survey and aligning this with the census results, we have been able to establish what the current farming situation looks like. The respondents to the survey accounted for over 7,000 ha of land owned and farmed (see appendix 5). This proportion of land covered by the survey suggests that the number of actual farmers in London may be substantially lower than the 574 we originally considered there to be. Almost 90% are involved in cropping, mainly permanent grass and winter cereals. Over 40% are involved in stocking, mainly through beef and dairy herds. Very few have sheep. Produce is sold to a variety of outlets, ranging from supermarkets, to wholesalers, to farm shops and other methods of direct selling. Many of the livestock farmers have reduced numbers in recent years mainly due to lack of infrastructure to support livestock farming (i.e. access to abattoirs, markets etc) and the difficulties of farming livestock on the urban fringe (i.e. worrying of stock by dogs, smell etc). The amount of permanent pasture in relation to the amount of stock suggests that a large amount of grassland has been given over to equine use.

5.2 Organic farming

Only 3% of the respondents are currently organic, accounting for less than 10% of the land within the area. Organic farming has traditionally been taken up by small to medium size farms where farmers consider they can 'add value' and therefore increase incomes. Many of the larger farms have an established system and many

farmers consider these systems (cereals, field vegetables and intensive livestock) difficult to convert to organic while continuing to make money. There is also a hesitation to convert to organic in certain sectors (milk and cereals) due to previous organic market collapses and poor management decisions made by those promoting conversion. There is also frustration in the meat sectors where most organic lamb and some beef is sold conventionally because there is no market for it as organic produce. However 1 in 10 farms are considering or actively going organic.

There are however, a number of larger farms outside the London Farming area that have converted to organic to maximise subsidy and 'value added' income. Farms considering converting inside the London Farming area have seen these benefits and will be attempting to increase their income by 'adding value' through local sales (farmers markets or other direct selling routes). This route is often not seen as an option for larger farmers due to the high time commitment for small markets.

The major concern around converting to organic, was that the market will only ever be a niche market and the supply chain infrastructure is not sufficiently well developed to get the produce to market at a premium. Many of the farmers feel that more focus should be given to getting the supply chains in place for local food over organic.

5.3 Financial state of farm businesses

Many of the farmers consider that their businesses are in reasonable financial health, although many acknowledged that this is often due to diversification away from the core agricultural business. Over a quarter of respondents have doubts over their financial future but this percentage is considerably lower than those seen in other regions across the country.

Smaller farms have had considerable earning pressure placed on them recently and although some may have already diversified or found alternative income to support the farming income, for many smaller farms there are barriers to diversifying. Nearly half of the farms contacted expect to have to change practice or diversify their business soon.

The farms that will rely on agriculture to make a living will be the larger ones and will already be making business decisions based on business performance. It is indicative of the current economic climate that many in the London area may be considering giving up/selling to increase profit or take value from assets.

5.4 CAP Reform

The reforms to the Common Agricultural Policy are a potential issue for many, mainly because they are unsure as to what effect the reforms will have. Nearly half of the farms expect CAP Reform to have little effect on their prospects, but over a quarter think it will worsen their outlook. For extensive livestock farmers and horticultural producers, the effects are likely to be positive, but for dairy farmers, cereal farmers and intensive livestock producers the effects are likely to be negative.

5.5 Labour

Labour shortage does not appear to be a problem with many of the farms having access to populations of mainly immigrant labour. However, specialist skill sets are not always available and this could be a problem in the longer term.

5.6 Adding value to produce

Over a third of the farms are adding value as food or drink producers, primarily meat, fruit, vegetables and dairy goods. A few of these are selling through their own or others' farm shops, but most are selling through other forms of direct marketing such as postal or internet. It was noticeable that very few were selling through farmers' markets due to the return on time input. Some farmers were actively considering further investment in buildings, cold stores etc to enable them to be able to have more produce meet the requirements of the major retailers markets.

The whole issue of marketing was raised in many different guises. Many of the organisers of farmers' markets or wholesale markets feel that there is insufficient supply of quality organic food produced within the London area. This is contrary to the comments from organic producers who are unable to achieve a premium for their organic produce. People working with the farmers feel there was little support or advice about how farmers could improve their marketing. Many farmers believed that there is a demand for local produce but are unsure as to how to reach the market.

Many of the farmers who responded recognised a need for training in this area and other management type skills. However they were not always able to access training to meet their needs either due to cost of training, location or duration of training courses.

Farmers feel that the 'just in time' ordering system means that producers need to work together to supply supermarkets and other large purchasers. At present, this is limited by the lack of a 'figurehead' to act as a link between farmers and buyers. Farmers feel that supplying to schools is an opportunity that could be developed, but again, few farms would be of sufficient scale to do this alone.

5.7 Diversification

The range of diversified enterprises is extensive amongst the respondents (see appendix 6), with diversified enterprises accounting for almost a third of farm income, much higher than elsewhere in the country. For those that have not yet diversified, nearly half are expecting to have to change their business practice or diversify in the future. The most popular options are those which require the least capital investment and although they are not the most financial rewarding options, they are deemed lower risk options. Leasing of buildings to third parties and equine facilities are the most likely diversification activities to be in place, accounting for 58% of respondents. This follows similar patterns to elsewhere in the country, although farm shop, children's nurseries and other direct services to the public all feature more highly near urban areas in other parts of the country. These types of enterprises could be encouraged more in the London area.

Another barrier to developing diversification enterprises is considered to be the restrictions imposed by landlords (including councils) within tenancies. A number of farmers felt aggrieved in circumstances where their landlords had not been receptive to the farmers developing new enterprises.

Other concerns linked to diversification related to communication issues. Farmers feel that government initiatives to support diversification activity have not filtered down to local government level. There appears to be a general lack of understanding of farming and rural businesses amongst city planners and it is felt that planners often appear to support planning applications from larger 'flagship' businesses such as football clubs rather than smaller businesses.

The attitudes of local residents could also be a problem at times due to suspicions or concerns about traffic, noise etc. Farmers believe that there is also a lack of understanding of the day-to-day operation of farm businesses and in many cases this has led to complaints about noises and smells.

Planning legislation and lack of capital are the two most cited reasons across the country as barriers to diversification. Lack of capital was cited as a lesser issue around London than elsewhere in the country.

5.8 Planning

The key national Planning Policies in this case are PPG2 – Green Belts (January 1995) and PPS7 – Sustainable Development in Rural Area (August 2004). The open land around London is designated as Green Belt. Open space within London can also be protected through planning designations such as Metropolitan Open Land or by locally derived open space designations. The Mayor's London Plan reiterates the national policies and promotes appropriate farm diversification that contributes to achieving the objectives of the Green Belt.

The primary aim of PPG2 is to protect the open character of the Green Belt, with a presumption against inappropriate development unless there are very special circumstances. PPS7 states that any wider benefits of farm diversification proposals, which would otherwise result in inappropriate development in terms of PPG2, may contribute to the very special circumstances required for permission to be granted.

In London the respondents indicated that they already have a wide range of diversification activities in place (see appendix 7); however many commented that planning legislation is the major obstacle to developing more (47% of the respondents). Farmers in close proximity to urban areas have a greater number of diversification options available to them but only if the planning process is considerate of new opportunities.

The farmers commented that planning policy seems to be somewhat aggressive within the greenbelt, and that a more imaginative approach to agricultural development is needed. They feel that there is little recognition of the service which new diversification enterprises might provide to the local community. This is perhaps reflective of the fact that many of the Boroughs planning policies did not even consider diversification.

Public perception of the relevant planning legislation and restrictions is likely to have a correlation with the findings of the survey. It is likely those landowners and would-be developers are dissuaded from diversification and development schemes on the basis that they feel they will not be favoured by the relevant planning authority. This may, for example, be founded on 'hearsay' discussion with neighbouring landowners who may have had schemes refused, and also the feeling that their Green Belt status may well preclude non-agricultural development. Naturally the interaction with other factors such as lack of capital, environmental issues etc. is likely to further dissuade individuals pursuing a scheme which is perceived as having an uncertain planning outcome.

The respondents' returns may be reflective of actual failed planning applications, although not necessarily for a failed diversification scheme. This is not quantifiable. Failed applications will undoubtedly impinge greatly on individual opinions on the

planning system. However, the reasons for refusal are likely to extend to a broad range of ancillary issues such as environmental grounds, visual intrusion, nature and scale of the proposed development, site suitability, highways implications etc., and not just actual planning policies.

Farmers and landowners often misunderstand the relationship between planning policies and see the Green Belt as being totally restrictive, whereas Green Belt policy does allow for appropriate development for example sport, recreation and re-use of buildings.

5.9 Environment and access

With regard to environmental issues, the respondents stated that their focus is likely to be on hedging, trees and land conservation in relation to entry level schemes and GAEC (Good Agricultural and Environmental Conditions). Many see hedgerows and trees as easier management options and less intrusive on their normal farming practices.

Most farms in the survey have public footpaths and/or nature trails, averaging 2.7 kilometres per holding.

Interest in diversifying into environmental/sustainable practices is low, although there is greater interest from the larger farms. This may be a result of CAP reform and the introduction of the Entry Level Scheme. Many of the farmers would welcome help and support from London with regard to some environmental issues, as they are concerned that they do not get enough help to reduce dumping and littering on farm. Some believed that dumping and littering are out of control.

A major barrier is the lack of information about future policies relating to land usage under the CAP Reform. This results in many landowners being reluctant to enter land in environmental schemes or allow it to be developed for diversification in case it jeopardises the potential for development or affects the capital value of the land. As information about future schemes under the ERDP from 2007 becomes available, this situation may change.

The difference in priorities different boroughs give to farming, food and public access makes larger schemes a lot more difficult to organise and get established. The short-term priority makes accessing funds difficult and often the schemes themselves are short term with little linkage to previous schemes. Several farmers were keen to see economic benefits from schemes that demonstrated linkage between the produce and how the land is managed. Currently they believed there was not sufficient economic return.

The awareness of some existing environmental projects was low amongst the farmers, for example only a few farmers located in the North of London had heard of the Green Arc project and only one had engaged in any related activity. This suggests that perhaps the message from the Green Arc project was not being targeted directly at farmers, but if it is to succeed the project will need to address this issue. It should also be noted that Green Arc partnerships are also being formed in other quadrants around London. Further activity is required by Green Arc to get engagement from the farmers.

5.10 Social issues

Communication with local communities is limited, although a high proportion of farmers belong to a network of some description. The most popular sources of information are the farming press, NFU meetings and other farmers. There is little routine use of the Internet.

One of the barriers that the consultation identified is the ability of people to communicate effectively with farmers and vice versa. This applies especially to local government officials or regional scheme managers. When decisions are being made which would affect farmers, the usual approach would be to have a representative from the National Farmers Union (NFU) or the Country Landowners and Business Association (CLA). However, the farmers interviewed feel that these representatives would often not know what the local issues or concerns were.

It is well recognised that farmers are important to the London community although it was seen that this was as a way of maintaining and managing the rural landscape rather than for the food they produce or the jobs they generate.

A major concern is the lack of understanding or connection that many Londoners have about where or how the food they eat was produced. The farmers are keen to play a more active role in help inform people about the different practices, however time constraints on simply dealing with their businesses on a day to day basis would limit their effectiveness. The issue of third parties taking an active role in this communication process was raised but many recognised that that there is a cost to this that farmers could not afford to pay. All who took part in the work suggested that a lot more effort was needed to inform Londoners about food and farming to educate them about where and how their food is produced. The education process should involve not only children but also the adult population. It is considered that television is the most successful means of promoting these issues but also the most expensive.

For the people involved in managing parklands and public areas the lack of public transport is the major barrier preventing better utilisation of the open spaces. There is also a big issue over the lack of public awareness of what facilities were available. In some cases the issue of safety was also a barrier to these facilities being used.

It is felt that ethnic minorities have the potential to benefit the farmers of London but a lack of understanding about their cultural needs is a large barrier. It is felt that these groups are least likely to utilise the open spaces due to cultural differences.

5.11 Crime

The impact of crime on the farmers in London is considered to be greater than many areas of the UK. Trespass, theft and vandalism each have significant effects on many of the farm businesses. This often results in high additional costs on the businesses both in costs of replacement or repair and in increased insurance premiums.

Crime is seen as a big barrier in relation to people utilising public spaces although this is often *perceived* crime, with vandalism being one of the biggest problems. It is felt that there is not a sufficiently obvious police presence, as police tend to focus on the more densely populated areas.

Further to this, young people living close to the farms lack facilities for recreation; this leads to boredom and vandalism. Some farmers are concerned that the more access the public were given, then the higher chances of attracting a 'bad element' to the farm. This is countered to some extent by one farmer who has found it useful to encourage the use of footpaths across the farm as the presence of more people helped to limit opportunities for criminal activity. Another has provided a motorbiking track.

The farmers generally feel that they are not given sufficient support to deal with crime, with the attitude often being that a problem on private land is not a public concern. The example of fly tipping was given. If the waste is not dumped on a public highway, the farmer must bear the cost of removing it. Farmers feel that a better partnership with the police would be of benefit. Any help in dealing with crime could only be of use if it had sufficient 'teeth'/enthusiasm.

Farmers also have general worries over health and safety, especially in relation to the scope and cost of insurance for visitors to the farm.

6. Possible future trends

Looking to the future what might the London farming scene look like post CAP reform? These scenarios are based on the results from the London Survey and the census data for the region and assume no intervention.

6.1 Dairy Sector

Dairy farms in the London farming area will be mainly focused around the M25 or other major roads where collection tankers have good access. There is a high demand for this milk due to its good road links and close proximity to the customer and in a good proportion of cases a London Premium is paid for it.

The London survey results show that a similar pattern of restructuring will occur to that already seen. A number of herds will cease production, however, cow numbers in those herds remaining will increase and milk production will remain similar to current levels.

Production has moved to the beef or cereal sectors for those herds that have gone out of production previously, however, under the CAP reforms, this may not necessarily happen. The survey results are inconclusive in this area, although it may be because many farmers are opting for a wait and see policy.

6.2 Arable Sector

The results from the arable sector are starker in comparison to the dairy sector and show some substantial changes. Predictions for England give a reduction in arable area of 5% - 10%. However, in localised regional areas where production is difficult or there are logistical problems this will be substantially higher.

Within the London farming area, production on the better farming land (M1 clockwise to the M20) will continue, where urban encroachment is not causing problems. However, farmers in the remaining area will be considering carefully their production.

Urban encroachment and logistics will play an important factor in farmers' decisions and those who have had problems in getting to land may just cease production on that land.

The survey also confirms the move away from spring cereals and this trend looks to continue. However, previously this would have resulted in a move to winter production, under the CAP reforms, this land may now be left uncropped.

On the ground, the farming area from the M1 to the M20 will remain similar to current cropping. The remaining area and that close to urban centres may become uncropped.

6.3 Beef Sector

The reduction in beef cattle (suckler cows and finishing cattle) follows that of other regions in the UK, although in slightly higher proportions. This is due to a number of factors including CAP reform, access to markets and market prices. In the short term the London Farming area will see a reduction in cattle numbers. However, if market prices increase, which Defra are predicting (up to 20%) there will be a resulting increase in cattle numbers. The problem of cyclic prices arises and cattle numbers will rise and fall in line with these as farmers move in and out of production.

6.4 Sheep Sector

Sheep numbers after the CAP reforms will fall but the number of holdings that have sheep will increase as farmers move from intensive production systems to uncropped land and use sheep to maintain the land. Sheep are a cheap way of controlling grass.

6.5 Horticultural Sector

The horticultural sector should remain largely unaffected by the CAP reforms, as farms did not receive a payment under the previous CAP system. The pressure on the horticultural sector is likely to come from further up the supply chain as it becomes even more fragmented due to changing operational processes of the supermarkets.

6.6 Organic sector

The future scale for organic production, despite the market prices, may increase slightly as one in ten respondents said they may consider conversion to organic production, although for some of these, the issues to be resolved as to the impact of CAP reform may be a deciding factor either way. However currently there is well below 10% of the land in organic production and even if the farmers who indicated that they might convert, actually do convert, this would still only account for a small percentage of total land.

7 Analysis of Results

The response to the survey and information gleaned from the subsequent interviews has been good. The sample accounts for over 7,000 hectares of land owned and farmed within London. Almost 90% are involved in cropping, mainly permanent pasture and winter cereals. Over 40% are involved in stocking, mainly beef and some dairy herds. The amount of land farmed is likely to reduce soon as many of the farms; especially the larger ones are likely to take land out of agricultural production.

7.1 CAP reform

Generally the impact of CAP is considered to be minimal with about a quarter of the farmers considering they will be significantly worse off. Although nearly half of all the farmers considered that they have to change their practice or diversify their own businesses soon. Overall the business health of London farmers is marginally better than elsewhere in the country but it is important to note that this does not recognise the need for capital repayments or reinvestment required.

7.2 Adding Value

In relation to food production, over a third of the respondents are already food producers i.e. selling direct to consumers in some form or other. But there is a reluctance to increase this market as time to research and find new market outlets was considered to be a limiting factor. The main outlets for produce are their own or other owned farm shops. Farmers markets were considered to be useful but time consuming for the producer. Box schemes and mail order are considered less time consuming for the farmer but scale and continuity are often problems. Meat producers prefer mail order to other farmers' markets as it is bulk purchase and easier to deal with.

One of the key issues for London farmers is scale of operation in relation to the demand of the market place. The next smallest region the North East, has over 13 times as many holdings as London. It is therefore not surprising that farming in London has not been as high a priority to policy makers as it has in other regions. This is especially so when one considers the negligible impact that these farms have on London's food supply. However, when looking at London's farmers as an environmental/leisure resource their importance to London is more significant as they are responsible for managing over 13,000 ha of land. The challenge for London authorities and others is to get the farmers to recognise this as an asset, as the respondents indicate that the potential for diversifying into sustainable practices or environmental improvements is low. The farmers will need some encouragement to direct their thinking to consider the environment as a commodity. This could be in the form of environmental scheme payment or by support and facilitation to help the farmer put in place environmental management.

One of the key problems for farmers outside of London currently is the plethora of schemes and projects offering advice in relation to farm business and environment. Some of the schemes have not been easily accessed by London farmers historically due to a variety of reasons such as lack of information, 'red tape' or simply location. London has the opportunity to integrate these schemes under a single programme. This is more likely to achieve results as the farmers will be keener to engage in a process that is simple. A farm advice service that offered support on the issues of CAP reform, water framework directive, waste issues, positive environmental benefit etc. would benefit the farmers and initiate change at farm level to help achieve some of London's priorities. This could be done as a pilot project for the rest of the country to take note of. An integrated package offering advice and support on sustainability would make best use of resources and help farmers engage in the supply chain.

The market outlets for the farmers' produce is also variable with a number of options being made available to those farmers who are looking to add value to their products. For commercial dairy farmers the availability of different milk buyers allows the farmers to select a dairy to supply to, which will allow them to maximise their milk contract. For livestock producing farms the location of livestock markets and

abattoirs is not as abundant. This results in stock travelling 40-50 miles in order to be slaughtered or sold. However the capital cost of establishing a low throughput abattoir to meet current regulation, even if an existing site or buildings were available and could be converted, may be prohibitive without a substantial grant aid. The margin on running a slaughter house with processing facilities and, perhaps more importantly, hanging facilities, to meet the requirements of London farmers is likely to be too small to tempt many business people to start up in the first place. It is likely that a venture such as provision of a small abattoir, processing facilities and chilling room would not only require initial pump priming but ongoing funding to make it happen. But as a public service initiative to encourage local food consumption of quality produce this may be deemed worthwhile.

Within any sector, competitive advantage is a key concept. The movement of goods has become so cheap that the traditional market gardening belts of big cities have disappeared as the location of production has become less important due to container transport, roll on/off ferries and air freighting of fresh produce etc. Even the need for a lot of labour for production is unlikely to ensure viability in the production of goods because of the required labour's high cost.

There is good reason to believe that the competitive advantage lies in the proximity of open space to large numbers of consumers, but not in the provision of goods, which can be easily transported from far away. This results in businesses looking at alternative ways to generate income, such as diversification options.

Combine these issues in relation to the changes in our cultural society and the whole agricultural industry has been subject to increasing pressures. The latest Common Agricultural Policy reforms have themselves for the first time broken the link between production based support payments. From January 1st 2005 farmers and growers will no longer receive subsidies based on the number of animals they keep or for growing specific crops. Farmers will be able to receive a single payment providing they can demonstrate they are taking due care of the environment. This change in payment will cause many businesses to consider the viability of specific enterprises and indeed businesses. Therefore the amount of land farmed within London is likely to reduce soon.

The majority of farmers farming within London are optimistic about their future. They do believe they have a future but recognise that this will not necessarily be by producing food. Despite this optimism a lot could be done to help both the farmers and the people of London gain a better understanding about how food is produced and what facilities the open spaces and countryside can offer.

Whilst some of the issues are of individual concern, there does appear to be a lack of actual co-operation and collaboration between the farmers, particularly when it comes to marketing their produce. For some there is no need but for many of the medium to small size farms there does appear to be a willingness to consider working together providing it does not occupy too much of the farmers own time or money.

Access to different market outlets is not as easy for farmers as it often first appears. The conventional markets for commodity produce are the easiest for farmers to utilise. There are often a number of milk buyers looking to secure local supply. For combinable crops, merchants and exporting merchants are also easy to contact and sell to. Farmers often lack expertise in marketing, and training for the development of these skills is often hard to come by, as it does not fit in with running a farm business.

For smaller amounts or added value produce, then more local supply chains are required. There is a comprehensive list of farmer markets within the London area but despite this, acquiring a stand on one of these sites is not easy. Competition from farmers not as central to London is the biggest problem due to them often being of a larger size and scale and thus able to offer product all year round. The market managers are keen to ensure that stalls are there regularly but for the smaller farms or those that produce products that are truly seasonal, this is not feasible.

A large emphasis (especially from the food media and high profile chefs) is also put on producing the food organically with only 3% of the farmers with London being organic. Often the products sold at farmers markets require some processing which take time and capital to establish the facilities, which some farmers simply don't have. Also in terms of revenue, farmers markets are not high turnover sales options and the annual turnover is unlikely to be sufficient to meet the business and personal needs of a farm.

New market opportunities are available to the farmers of London particularly with demand for Ethnic food. But information on the scale of the market and the market requirements is lacking, along with access to the technological requirements of producing the goods. In relation to meat products there may be a requirement for research into some of the alternative methods of production to establish if London farmers could meet some of the demand which is currently being met by illegal imports. Farmers, trading standards and environmental health officers alike would welcome discussion around these issues but a co-ordinated approach would require initial facilitation.

One of the major problems with a lot of the current food projects within London is focus. Many are concentrating fully on their part of the food chain and doing a good job but few are truly linking together to consider the whole picture. To encourage cohesion at local level and to make some of these linkages from farm to fork, the whole could be brought under the umbrella of London Food as a brand. The aim of a brand is to positively engage consumers, producers and others in the food chain to be more demanding and encourage better supply. If the brand was to focus on local quality food, many of the current initiatives could sit comfortably under this brand. With funding for marketing, research, general information and awareness done centrally, many of the local projects could then focus on activity to actually achieve the connections. Part of this could be the establishment of a network of farmers and suppliers to encourage connectivity. Many of the people interviewed for this report were keen for this to happen.

7.3 Diversification

The farmers in London are already operating a wide range of diversified enterprises but the biggest barrier to farms developing more is considered to be planning issues – real or otherwise.

The constraints of the planning system are key to what can be done with land to extract a return from consumers. 'Horseyculture' is likely to be a very important. Other land use which taps the leisure market (golf courses, paint ball ranges, go karts etc.) is likely to have advantages. There is also potential for other proposals, including recreational activities, biomass initiatives, flood control, nature conservation and community woodland, that could take advantage of the urban fringe location.

We have looked at a range of development plan policies as part of this project. The relevant local plans or unitary plans, whilst having similar policies do vary. Some for example do not have specific policies on diversification and therefore tend to rely on other policies and national policy. This may restrict proposals in these areas.

Local plan policy generally supports diversification, re-use of buildings and encourages outdoor, sport, leisure, recreational and other ancillary uses, but the lack of policy on diversification in some Authorities may be restrictive. In terms of planning policy there is certainly support nationally and in the Mayor's London Plan, for appropriate diversification proposals and whilst local policy does vary, our view is that appropriate well-conceived and sustainable schemes which do not adversely affect the openness of the Green Belt or rural character potentially should stand a good chance of success.

The management of land and assets in many cases can be hampered if the farmer is a tenant. Often tenancy agreements will prevent certain types of activity from taking place. Even if a farmer is looking to diversify or utilise their land in a different way the Landlord might not be agreeable. In some cases this could be because the landlords have concerns about what the implications to them might be, such as tax or asset profile.

7.4 Social and communication issues

The farmers feel that because they represent a tiny minority of the business activity taking place in London, they are not well represented or understood. This is in relation to how the food is produced and the public general perception of farmers. The foot and mouth outbreak in 2001 did make the public realise that a vast majority of farms are run by families who show a lot of consideration about the welfare of their animals and the surrounding environment. But again times have moved on from that point.

7.5 Crime

Crime perceived or actual, has a large impact on the farming practices taking place within London. The scale and nature of the crime does vary due to location but there are some common problems such as vandalism, trespass and fly tipping. The potential liabilities of landowners e.g. the duty of care to trespasser, has been oft quoted as a major barrier to further development of on farm activity.

Crime is a factor most farmers experience and work with. In many cases the farming system has changed to compensate for the fact that crime was or would take place. This is a time of change for farmers and landowners alike. Many of the farmers are keen that the public is educated about the contribution of farming to food and the environment. At the same time they themselves may need to know more about what they can achieve and have practical demonstration so that they can improve the landscape and food supply for London.

8. Implications for LDA's Aspirational Outcomes

Considering the comments of all the consultees in relation to the LDA's aspirational outcomes, ADAS makes the following conclusions.

8.1 Organic Food

A doubling of certified organic food production by 2009

Based on the farmers' responses and their attitude to conversion, the LDA is unlikely to meet this target without some form of intervention. While many consumers, be they domestic or professional, comment that more organic food is required, there is not the infrastructure in place to allow for local organically grown produce to be marketed in an efficient way. The current rewards for farmers to convert to organic production are not significant enough to encourage more to convert in the current marketplace. But recommending market intervention is not an option allowed under current EC scheme rules.

There does appear to be a contradiction with consumers requesting more organic produce and the organic farmers saying there are not adequate markets, which again points to missing links in the supply chain. Many organic farmers do not have processing capacity to add value. Seasonality factors also have a big impact on the availability of markets, with many markets requiring year round supply, which cannot happen for the majority of crops grown organically in this country. Strategic intervention is required if this outcome is to happen.

8.2 Access

A network of rights of way (ROW) to allow access to 25% of London farms by 2008

Again based on the farmer's responses the LDA is unlikely to reach this target due the farmer's issues over crime and the cost of developing the areas. The new environmental scheme does offer some financial incentives but often won't cover the cost of the work. However some of the farmers are keen to consider this but it would require consultation and careful planning with farmers to become a viable option. There is also an issue to be raised with local authorities as some farmers had been refused when they either applied to open new footpaths or have footpaths upgraded to bridle paths.

Within the Mayor's Biodiversity strategy, the importance of the farmland to biodiversity is recognised and in particular the Mayor has made a commitment to supporting and encouraging the use of agri-environment schemes to enhance London Farms biodiversity, along with a number of other relevant proposals. What needs to be done now is to establish what practical help this can be translated into.

8.3 Markets

A greater capacity for London farmers to sell food in London markets and 3% of Greater London Areas (GLA) food being purchased direct from London farmers by 2006

Based on current consumption patterns and land availability the LDA is not going to reach the target of 3%. There is greater capacity for London farmers to sell food in a range of London markets but there is a lack of infrastructure to enable more farmers to access these markets. Public procurement offers the greatest opportunity and scale for the supply chain. However there is much to be done to raise awareness at all links of the chain.

At the other end of the scale, the potential to increase the size and number of farmers' markets within London is there from both the demand side and supplier side. However it is considered that too much emphasis is put on organically grown produce; local should be a key feature rather than organic. Smaller farmers cannot commit to regular supply of product, which decreases their chances of getting a stall.

Market managers must be made aware of some of the constraints facing some farm types and understand these issues. Allowing a proportion of stalls to be rotated around a group of farms or stall sharing in some cases will bring flexibility to the market place.

Land type and lack of irrigation will constrain the development of horticultural units within London. There is, however, the opportunity to improve this situation within the next 'layer' out. This must be market led to give farmers the confidence to develop new enterprises. Again a network of producers with a market facilitator would be useful.

8.4 Local Food

Improve consumer knowledge of local suppliers/seasonal produce

There are a great many organisations currently trying to improve consumer knowledge. More, however, could be done to the benefit of both farmers and consumers.

Some good examples are to be found within the social food projects, such as Growing Communities which raise awareness of where food comes from and creates the link between producer and consumer, albeit on a very small scale. Growing Communities is a North London organisation set up to make a positive contribution towards sustainable development. By working together on a range of local projects; including Neighbourhood Food Growing Project, a local Organic Vegetable Box Scheme and a weekly Farmers Market they hope to improve quality of food available and benefit the community and the environment.

The main problem with many of these projects is the cost in relation to scale and within the food sector where the margins are small, this will be a continual problem unless the issue of scale is addressed. Although it should be noted that profit is very rarely the driving issue behind social food projects, it is more likely to be the desire to make a change.

There also seems to be reluctance for projects to enter into dialogue with farmers to achieve aims. Many seem to be seeking to achieve results through gardening on a large scale, which although valid from a social aspect, will not have major impact on the population of London.

The key to many successful projects is the concept of linkage, linking the different 'product histories' of places, items and ideas. The more these can be linked the greater the chance that through buying/using one product individuals will learn about others and be encouraged to buy/use them too. This will encourage money to stay within the local economy, with the associated environmental benefits of reduced transport costs for goods and people. Linking food to London will start that development.

Linking food to nature conservation such as through agri-environmental schemes, on-farm wildlife is a positive spin off from the agriculture undertaken. This can be reversed, so that food can be a positive spin-off from nature conservation. An example of this is New Forest Nature Reserve Lamb, marketed specifically for its role in conserving agricultural practices in the New Forest.

Linking food, place and local cultural activities is already undertaken on a small scale through farmers markets, Community Supported Agriculture projects etc but alternative forms of 'local food' are interesting possibilities. So instead of the

traditional form of local, for example the borough or within a certain distance, it can be looked at in a more 'natural' perspective. An example of such a natural perspective would be river catchments or area of parkland.

8.5 Crime

A Metropolitan Police farm support scheme in place by 2006

The Safer Neighbourhoods scheme is working towards coverage of all the boroughs by 2006. This is a multi-agency scheme. By encouraging farmers to take part at the community level, the priorities of the farm could be moved up the local agenda. The communication process between farmers and local people can be facilitated and from that, understanding will grow. In addition, a farm watch scheme could be implemented over the whole of the area, which would help the farmers improve their own security.

8.6 Planning

A biennial conference on farming and planning issues

In principle we consider the figure of 47% who perceive a planning problem could, and should, be reduced with more education or individual support. Any advice given must take account of the different pressures that face tenant farmers as opposed to owner-occupiers. They often find it difficult to progress diversification projects due to tenancy issues and lack of capital and assets on which to borrow against. Landlords are also often reluctant to agree to give permission for, say, change of use of buildings, although this can be overcome with sensible and open discussion from the inception of the idea.

9 Conclusions and Recommendations

We have highlighted below a list of further actions that can be undertaken by the LDA and partners to achieve the desired outcomes. Some of the activities would contribute to more than one outcome. It must be noted that there is considerable activity already being undertaken by individuals and organisations, often unpaid and which will contribute to the outcomes, although scale will always be an issue due to the nature of some of this activity and the limitations of short term funding.

9.1 Organic Food

As indicated earlier in the report, farmers are not confident about accessing the market for organic food due to constraints on the supply chain infrastructure. It is also clear from this research that the farmers see a definite need for an interface between themselves and the consumer. If a market can be demonstrated, some farmers will respond by changing production techniques to increase the amount of certified organic food available. There are a number of small food projects around the capital but no central focus. Where these projects endeavour to source local food, it tends to have a garden or allotment level of focus rather than farm-scale. A network similar to the Food Link type would work, but the focus must be on farms and not just allotments and gardens.

The network should be facilitated with a project officer to co-ordinate the activity, maintain a database of producers, customers and suppliers. With a demand led supply chain, more farmers may be encouraged to convert if some of the pressure of marketing and distribution is taken off of them. This could be under the London Brand (see below).

We recommend

- a project to initially quantify the scale of market demand for local food rather than organic, and relate it to individual producers, providing them with the information to enable them to find a profitable route to market, as well as establishing a database of producers. As an ongoing basis the project will support a facilitator for 2-3 years. This could possibly be funded partly by Defra Rural Enterprise Scheme (subject to the usual application procedure) as a community project with funding from the LDA.
- to research and assist in the development of small scale shared distribution such as the funding of a central depot and small vehicle to transport products to retailers and consumers. Or to pump prime a keen entrepreneur to take forward such a project.

9.2 Access

Although farmers have indicated they may be reluctant to develop more rights of way, with the right support we believe this could be changed. For example, support for the Green Arc Partnerships in engaging with farmers and promoting access through funding projects. The Green Arc approach serves to provide a strategic context that would help to focus resources on achieving wider strategic benefits.

If there is an opportunity to increase access either through expanding footpaths or onto farms, the LDA, local authorities and other partners could help fund a small pot of money to help cover capital costs and insurance costs.

From the public's point of view, some land and sites are 'honeypots', whilst others are not utilised at all. To improve public access there needs to be an improvement of the promotion of such sites and also in the public transport system to enable people to access the sites for example having buses and trains that allow bikes on board to get them to cycle paths in off-peak hours (most London trains in fact already do this). To promote such areas, the use of the public transport system itself would be welcome. A snapshot of a site on the side of a bus, along with words such as 'let us take you here', would be a simple and relatively cheap promotional campaign.

We recommend:

- that the LDA support the Green Arc partnerships is engaging with farmers and promoting access by providing project funds
- that publicly accessible countryside that is served by public transport be promoted for example through a TfL promotional campaign

9.3 Environment

With regard to more general conservation issues, London farmers tend to fall outside the remit of most schemes for agri-environment whether they be organised by Defra or others. In order to meet some of the commitments set out in the Biodiversity Strategy, a short-term project to work with the farmers to recognise their conservation value and advise them on improvements would be of benefit. This could tap into advice through a number of existing schemes such as Environment Sensitive Farming, Conservation and the Cross Compliance advice scheme. Farms that take part could then become part of a demonstration network (if appropriate) to allow

access either on a regular basis or on an event basis. This would also help relations between farmers and consumers. This could also contribute to the London food brand and in better partnership working as part of the Green Arc.

The LDA could set up a land management programme to support farmers to enable it to meet its target on conservation and biodiversity. This could be in addition to the Entry Level and Higher Level Schemes, with a particular focus at any one time. Considering the number of farmers that could potentially be involved, this type of scheme could return some worthwhile environmental benefits in relation to total cost. If it also considered biorenewable sources and waste as elements of the programme, then there could be economic benefit as well.

As well as food London consumes a great deal of energy, which the surrounding countryside could help create. Energy projects have been contentious in many local communities, with opposition to both wind and other power stations, but they have been popular when local people have been involved. Another possible form of local energy production is biomass, for electricity, heat, and CHP.

Biomass energy production is only marginally efficient. CHP can rapidly increase energy efficiency of biomass plants. CHP is less feasible with small numbers of large plants away from conurbations, but if instead dried wood could be taken by train into small-scale turbines in London, at appropriate scales, then the efficiency would rise considerably. Such uses of products from agricultural land work best in new developments, but London and its surroundings are continuing to develop, and if CHP could be installed in all new developments then it could significantly reduce CO2 emissions and keep money within the local community.

More work could be done at the local level on bio ethanol from wheat. This requires education at farm level but also linkage to be established with other aspects of the supply chain.

We recommend that:

- the LDA work with the Green Arc partnerships to set up a land management programme to support farmers to meet the strategic objectives of increasing access, improving land quality and in achieving biodiversity targets
- all of this type of activity could be rolled up into an integrated advice package for farmers to look at the whole farm approach, which could be used for the rest of the country as a pilot
- the LDA could undertake pilot projects to demonstrate the benefits and feasibility of the different green energy and environmental management projects.

9.4 Markets and Branding

As stated in the organic action, there is a requirement for facilitation between potential markets and the farmers. This will involve gaining an understanding of the market requirements and establishing what requirements the farmers would have to under take to win profitable business.

Public procurement has a role to play here to stimulate demand. A workshop to inform local authorities about local food and how to source it would be beneficial. The Defra initiative on public procurement will help. For the farmers a network of producers will also help in terms of collaboration and scale. These actions could form part of a project to stimulate demand and supply information.

A large-scale project to co-ordinate collection from London Farmers and to distribute via customer collection or box delivery would be welcomed. This could be a useful diversification for a local farmer subject to planning requirements being met. Existing large box scheme businesses could be encouraged into the Capital to set up in business. Alternatively one of the existing box schemes could be encouraged to expand with some input from a logistics specialist. Again this type of activity could be delivered under the London Food brand.

In relation to farmers markets in order to overcome the issue of scale and seasonality, local market officers should consider 'shared stalls' to allow producers with seasonal produce or lower outputs to access the market. This will also help with the outcome below.

A feasibility study should be considered to assess the cost of pump priming new infrastructure to improve the supply chain for meat and meat products. This should look at the cost of establishing a low throughput abattoir and processing facilities at an easy access point. It may be that a joint venture could be established between local independent butchers and farmers. Or it may need some ongoing commitment from London authorities as part of enabling access to local fresh quality product.

A campaign aimed at both adults and children to raise awareness of local food could be piggybacked onto health campaigns. Strength can be added to the message if farmers are able to demonstrate the links. More open days on farms and community-supported agriculture schemes would improve the situation. Linking up with charities like Thrive is useful for wider social and health benefits. Thrive is a national charity whose aim is to enable positive change in the lives of disabled and disadvantaged people through the use of gardening and horticulture. The projects for all of these activities could be branded as London Food. The brand is a useful way of co-ordinating a message.

We recommend:

- the establishment of London Food as an umbrella brand to bring cohesion to all of the food initiatives. If funding is made available for resources including staff, then activities such as that recommended in this report could be facilitated and existing activity could be supported further.

9.5 Crime

Encourage farmers to become involved in the community policing schemes such as the Safer Neighbourhood Schemes. This will also help in improving knowledge of farms and local produce as well to give a multi agency approach.

In terms of improving or channelling access on farms there are different ways of controlling problems for example a further benefit of willow grown for biomass is as a highly effective but not aesthetically unpleasant barrier to urban fringe vandalism. By year two it is effectively impenetrable. Miscanthus would be a less suitable crop, as it is more likely to burn, and does not act as such a strong barrier.

We recommend:

- encouraging farmers involvement in community policing schemes and in using natural solutions to reduce vandalism

9.6 Farm Diversification

The planning process needs to consider a range of issues in considering farm diversification proposals including: the policy context; statutory designations; access; car parking; scale and intensity of use; the impact on the landscape, wildlife habitat and historic features; noise pollution and other nuisance; drainage and water systems; neighbour amenity; and sustainable development.

Farm diversification can provide positive benefits that contribute to the aims of the Green Belt, such as outdoor recreation facilities, biomass / energy crops / green composting, nature conservation, woodland, horticulture and flood control. There is potential to provide environmental education, green skills / jobs and training that can include opportunities for children, young people, ethnic minorities and those with disabilities.

All London boroughs that contain land in farming use should contain policies that encourage appropriate farm diversification in their Local Development Documents (LDDs). Such policies are required to be in general conformity with the London Plan and to be consistent with national planning guidance. As the vast majority of farmland in London is also designated as Green Belt, any diversification policies need to be consistent within this framework. Initiatives that contribute to the positive use of the open land should be supported.

We recommend:

- that the London boroughs consider the following principles in developing farm diversification policies in LDDs:
 - proposals should
 - protect and enhance the countryside, wildlife habitat and historic features
 - contribute to the quality, management and access of the landscape
 - contribute to the objectives for the positive use of land in the Green Belt
 - ensure wider community benefits
 - be appropriate in scale, form and character for the location
 - reuse existing buildings
 - only include built elements that are ancillary to the open space use, small in scale and of high quality design
 - incorporate good quality design and sustainable development principles
 - promote environmental management
 - be accessible by public transport, walking and cycling
 - be accompanied by a farm management plan indicating the use of other land and buildings in the holding
 - proposals should not
 - significantly damage rural character, landscape quality or biodiversity value
 - have a significant adverse impact on the amenity of residents

- generate excessive traffic movements to the detriment of local amenity or prejudice highway safety
- generate excessive noise or other nuisance
- include new built development unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated

9.7 Planning

Progress could be made with increasing knowledge and promoting best practice in 3 ways: -

1. It is considered that a biennial conference would not achieve as much as smaller workshops that either have a geographical focus or a topic. Into these workshops could be brought local planners and farmers for discussion and education.
2. Knowledge of landowners themselves in terms of what they can realistically do. This is often best done on site looking at specific issues. This is what the Defra Free Planning Advice Scheme sought to do by providing an overview of options and what the implications regarding planning policies were likely to be. This scheme has now ended but provided up to one day of consultancy and encouraged many landowners to pursue applications. The LDA and GLA should consider funding a continuation of this project to provide facilitation and one to one advice.
3. Specific education to Local Planning Authorities to illustrate best practice in implementing appropriate farm diversification in the Green Belt. Previously, conferences for Planning Officers have been extremely useful in updating professionals on the current state of agriculture and national policies, with examples of good diversification projects. This could be within a Local Authority or across a number of authorities with up to 20 people per seminar.

The workshops for farmers could be widened to cover issues such as marketing and other diversification. The spin off from these could lead to some new skills and training being provided to meet the needs of specific diversification activity. This could include a support programme for those farmers who are wanting to get out of farming but do not want to sell land, covering what options are available and what returns they can expect. This could build on the Defra's national programme 'Fresh start'. It may be that one of the options could include entering the land into a LDA land management scheme to help meet the targets under the Bio-diversity strategy.

9.8 Other recommendations

The above recommendations are made specifically in relation to the LDA's desired outcomes, however there are a number of other recommendations to be made and proposals for future actions as a result of the discussion with farmers and others, that were reached during the research.

The LDA in conjunction with the Food Standards Agency should undertake some research into the ethnic meat market. What is the scale of demand for these products and which ones London Farmers could supply? Legislation may need to be amended to meet the need.

Further analysis may be required to consider the amount of land required to meet the needs of London. This could be done at various levels –

- From analysis of land within the boroughs,
- Through public procurement requirements,
- Or total requirements of London

In order to target resources, further analysis could be undertaken to identify agricultural areas that would support social inclusion objectives. This could enable the definition of areas for targeted projects, for example encouraging a farm to give up some land for allotments in an area where access to fresh produce is extremely limited.

Some issues have only been touched on within the scope of this research however there are opportunities to link the food produced, with waste recycling in order to help London meet some of its environmental requirements. Remembering that the land is a resource, for example Local Authority farms could be used as carbon sinks or compost sites with the farmer being paid to manage these sites.

A radical proposal could be to feed vegetable by-products to carp in ponds in the green belt or city ponds. These ponds could be part of a local nature reserve/fishing club, linking waste recycling, leisure, food production and habitat creation. When harvested the carp will then be a 'green' food, and if farmed commercially then after removing the cohort of fish from a pond these can be sold as effectively 'environmentally friendly' fish, and the sludge from the base of the pond composted and sold as 'environmentally friendly' fertiliser.

The above represents a few examples of actions and requirements that need to be undertaken to achieve the LDA's outcomes.