

Chairman's update: July 2008

A quiet month for RAF but have been very active with other jobs. My NFU Horticultural colleagues helped us win the Best in Show Gold Cup for our exhibit in the flower show. I hope you saw the triumphant chair with cup in the Yorkshire Post. This exhibit creates much interest in the region's fruit and vegetable products and shows off the skills of our growers. A great advert for local food and Yorkshire.

I have also been spending a lot of time lobbying to help sort out the massive Brussels mess with future pesticide regulations. A revision to the review of the registration procedures (the most thorough in the world) has somehow managed to have a hazard measure put in rather than the always used risk assessment. This will result in most pesticides disappearing over next five years, not only reducing yields of arable crops but also virtually eliminating F&V production as we know it. To illustrate the point a road is a hazard, but there is only a risk if you cross when a car is coming. Just because the road is a hazard you do not dig it up and close all roads down. Thus "putting hazard" into pesticide regulations bans all pesticides as they all have some hazardous properties. The whole of UK Government and its agencies are in total agreement that we have a Brussels nonsense (I spoke to Rt Hon Hilary Benn at GYS on this subject) but we have a long fight as many very low output agricultural producers such as the Scandinavians see no serious problem!

The Government seems very insistent we all take notice and take part in the Draft Legislative Programme consultation. Not only did Rt Hon Rosie Winterton talk about it at the last RAF Forum, I was summoned to Leeds to hear her again, and this time supported by the younger Milliband. This Consultation is a Gordon Brown idea to have discussions on the Queen's speech content before the event. Gone is the old system of purdah for Government Ministers from August onwards about the content of new bills in Queen's speech and in comes total knowledge and consultation. From the effort being put in (Rt Hon Jonathan Shaw also mentioned it at last RAF chairs meeting) it is either not going well or we are all supporting Gordon's good policy. Please have a look at website for details. For my part I do think it could be progress as one option is to say far too much new stuff.

At Stockbridge Technology Centre we did our bit for the Year of Food and Farming. We had some 600 school children to harvest vegetables and salads, do cooking and healthy eating lessons. It kept dry pretty much throughout and the children had a wonderful time. The coaches to bring them were sponsored by local firms and it made a full morning on the BBC Radio York programme.

Finally the three pet sheep have had their bluetongue vaccination and suffered no side effects. Please make sure you encourage all your contacts to get their sheep vaccinated.

Graham Ward

P.S. remember the Forum on Thursday October 16th. Great speakers. Put in your diary now.