

# CASE STUDY

## Agrisgôp, Carmarthenshire

National Care Farming Initiative (UK)



### **The Prince of Wales is supporting a unique lamb marketing project in West Wales that has brought together a network of partners.**

The project will take quality lamb from 11 farms within a 15-mile radius of Llanybydder in Carmarthenshire to Marks and Spencer customers across Wales while at the same time providing learning opportunities for disadvantaged young people through the Prince's Trust.

The project is the brainchild of 10 farmers, who have an average age of 32 and each farm between 80 and 200 acres. They were brought together by Agrisgôp, an innovative management development programme for farmers and their families.

Run by the Welsh Assembly Government with European Social Fund support as part of Farming Connect, Agrisgôp is a free programme that provides farmers with an opportunity to develop their skills, confidence, ideas and future plans for their business.

The 10 farmers *pictured right* - Sion Evans, Mark Harris, Dewi Jones, Sion Jenkins, Rhodri Hughes, Rhun Williams, Geraint Williams, Rhodri Davies, Sulwyn Jenkins and Dafydd Mills – all have one thing in common: they want to make their family farms sustainable by adding value to their lamb and creating a unique selling point.

They realised that everybody in the food chain had to benefit from the initiative to make it successful.

With guidance from their Agrisgôp group leader, Huw Davies, of Menter a Busnes, they set up a series of meetings with Rob Cumine, agricultural manager for Marks and Spencer, and struck an agreement to supply the company with 200 lambs over a 12-week period for the company's Welsh stores.

Other partners in the chain are the Dunbia abattoir at Llanybydder, Dawn Meats at Cross Hands which will pack the lamb for Marks and Spencer, the Welsh Assembly Government's Food and Market Development Division, Hybu Cig Cymru and Welsh Lamb and Beef Promotions, who will provide marketing support.

Another part of the project will see the farmers providing work placements for 10 young people aged from 16 - 25 years from the Prince's Trust, which is working closely with Coleg Sir Gar on a pilot project to provide a 13-week learning programme that hopefully leads to careers working on the land.

Peter Davies, vice chairman of the Sustainable Development Commission in Wales who helps co-ordinate the Prince of Wales' charitable interests in the Principality, said the Prince had pledged his support for agriculture and family farms, which were at the heart of the rural community.





“The Prince of Wales is absolutely unflinching in his support for this project, which he hopes will develop a more sustainable future for the farmers involved,” he added.

Huw Davies said Marks and Spencer was the most challenging of the retailers considered by the group of farmers but they were all keen to work with the company because of its progressive approach to agriculture.

Mr Cumine said: “What we like about this group of farmers is that they have taken up the challenge. There is also a social aspect to this project and Marks and Spencer has a longstanding relationship with the Prince’s Trust.”

He said the company had launched its own sheep breeding programme with the aim of producing lamb with a distinctive taste. The West Wales farmers would be joining that programme later this year.

“Consumers come to our stores for something different and we need a product that tastes better every time,” he added. “If we get the product right then that’s half the battle; the second half is giving a margin on the farm.

He explained that the company imposed strict controls over its food supply chain and insisted on branding products and knowing exactly where each product came from.

One of the farmers, Rhun Williams, said the Agrisgôp group had broadened the minds of all the members about running a farm business. “Having considered all the different options we are very keen to develop our product to meet the needs of consumers in partnership with the Prince’s Trust, Marks and Spencer and Dunbia,” he explained.

“We are very grateful for the endorsement from Prince Charles and look forward to working with young people to give them an understanding of where their food comes from.”

Fellow Agrisgôp group member Rhodri Hughes said: “All of us can see significant advantages in the relationship with Marks and Spencer and we are ensuring that ethical farming, animal welfare and the environment are top priorities.”

Vivienne Bowen Morgan, of the Prince’s Trust’s Welsh office, said she was delighted that a pilot project had been formed to provide learning opportunities for 10 young people, who would hopefully develop careers in land based industries.

Peter Rees, of Gelli Aur College, congratulated the farmers for their initiative and bringing together such a powerful partnership of organisations.

Ursula Taylor, of Dawn Meats, said the company was delighted to be involved in the fantastic initiative while Wyn Williams, procurement officer for Dunbia, said it was refreshing to see a group of producers that was prepared to “go that extra mile” to sell their lambs.

Michael Rees Thomas, Hybu Cig Cymru’s marketing executive, said: “Seeing farmers taking the initiative gives us hope for the future.”

Sion Aron Jones, head of the strategic development unit at the Welsh Assembly Government’s Food and Market Development Division, said: “Collaborative ventures of this kind involve everybody in the food chain and set an example for others to follow.”

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