

1 **INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT**

2 INTERVIEWERS: Dolores Rey (Cranfield University) (Phone)

3 DATE: 24TH MAR 2016

4 FARM LOCATION (NUTS3): UKH14 (Suffolk)

5 ***Interviewers (I)***

6 *Grower (G)*

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8 **I: How much of your farm is irrigated?**

9 G: 80%

10 **I: What was the proportion irrigated in 2014?**

11 G: It is about 80% but of a smaller area

12 **I: What crops do you grow, are they rainfed or irrigated and average yields?**

13 G: Well everything is irrigated unless 100 hectares of seed potatoes that are not
14 irrigated. But everything else, all the early potatoes, all the maincrop potatoes and
15 all the vegetables are irrigated.

16 **I: And no cereals, no sugar beet, grass or fruit?**

17 G: No, generally we wouldn't irrigate cereals or sugar beet unless it is really dry.

18 **I: So you have them under rainfed conditions in your farm?**

19 G: Yes

20 **I: Could you tell me more or less the average yield for those crops?**

21 G: The rainfed seed potatoes would achieve 30 t/ha. Maincrop potatoes might do 60
22 t/ha irrigated, earlies...well it depends on what you call earlies because they don't
23 yield very high whether they have water or not. It is about quality

24 **I: Well, you can give me a range...**

25 G: OK, for earlies between 20 to 70 t/ha. Vegetables, we have 10 different
26 vegetables here, and it is not about yield it is about quality.

27 **I: What about cereals or sugar beet?**

28 G: Cereals are between 5-10 t/ha and sugar beet anything between 40-90 t/ha

29 **I: What are the water sources you use for irrigation?**

30 G: We have them all, except public water. Surface water probably 70 % and 30% in
31 groundwater.

32 **I: What type of abstraction license do you have?**

33 G: We have various. We have all-year abstraction, summer only abstraction and
34 winter only abstraction.

35 **I: What irrigation methods do you use?**

36 G: Hose reels 60%, 30% with booms and 10% with trickle

37 **I: When you have to decide when to irrigate and how much, what methods do
38 you use?**

39 G: We use a monitoring system, we put a probe in a lot of fields early in the season
40 which give us a computer read every day to help us making a decision and we
41 actually go into the fields to check ourselves.

42 **I: What is the final destination of your production?**

43 G: They all go for supermarkets. Well, cereals go for animal feed and sugar beet for
44 processing.

45 **I: For those going for supermarkets, do you have any forward contract with
46 them?**

47 G: All our contracts are generally with the packer in the middle.

48 **I: Now, let's start talking about droughts. You have here a list of past
49 droughts. I don't know for how long have you been in the business, but do
50 you remember the level of impact of each of them on your production?**

51 G: I can remember 1976 had a big impact, but growers were still better off because
52 prices compensated for the lack of yield. Of course in 1976 there wasn't so much
53 product going to the supermarket but it was more to the market. The drought in 88-
54 92 we got to the point we couldn't irrigate some of our crops because the river run
55 dry. So subsequently we invested money in a winter filled reservoir and since then
56 we haven't really been sort of water.

57 **I: So would you say 88-92 was high impact as the rest were low?**

58 G: 88-92 was the biggest impact really. Suddenly we realized we couldn't take a
59 supermarket contract unless you can guarantee supply. So we tried to sort that out
60 by investing in our own water and our own reservoir.

61 **I: Would you remember the yield reduction if any for the 2010-12 drought?**

62 G: There wouldn't have been any because we make sure we had enough water

63 **I: And also for the last drought, do you remember any increase in prices?**

64 G: Very little really because everything is contracted and those are fixed prices and
65 dry periods increase demand that always helps but don't increase the price that
66 much

67 **I: Yes, I have heard from other growers that the impact on prices was bigger**
68 **on previous droughts but not now**

69 G: if you go back to 1975-76 it had a huge impact. Since then people invested in
70 proper irrigation systems and hasn't been much impact on price.

71 **I: We have been talking about it a bit, but did you experience any problems**
72 **with the packers you are supplying to during a drought?**

73 G: Yes, usually it is not the yield but the quality. If you cannot irrigate, you lose the
74 quality. It doesn't matter what vegetable it is, what potato...you lose the quality if
75 you haven't got water

76 **I: And if that happens to you, what would be...?**

77 G: They reject it. If it is not well into pack the supermarkets wouldn't take it.

78 **I: Can you try and sell that production in a different market?**

79 G: You can try and sell it somewhere else but it is not a very good way to have a
80 long lasting relationship with our customers. Primarily we want to supply to
81 supermarkets and we can't do it through quality, we lost everything

82 **I: Yes, if they cannot rely on you...**

83 G: They will not give me a contract anymore

84 **I: How do you think the impact that drought has on the field is affecting the**
85 **rest of the food supply chain and how they can deal with it?**

86 G: It doesn't affect the prices very much...

87 **I: If they don't get the production level that they want, do they go to other**
88 **countries?**

89 G: Yes, they do. They will go straight to other countries where they can get the right
90 quality.

91 **I: Now, talking about abstraction restrictions, have you experienced any of**
92 **those during previous droughts?**

93 G: Yes, if you are abstracting out of a river and the river runs dry then they will cut
94 you off, because there is no water. You can argue as much as you like but if there is
95 no water there, you can't have it. So we have to try and have reservoirs we can fill
96 up in the winter when there is plenty of water.

97 **I: Do you remember if you have any restrictions in past droughts and if they**
98 **were mandatory or voluntary?**

99 G: They were voluntary. We organized in my river with all the abstractors to meet
100 and think how we are going to sort it out. So it sort of came voluntary but we did it in
101 a way that it didn't stop today, it stopped slowly over two weeks if you know what I
102 mean. EA were very receptive in getting the involvement from growers.

103 **I: That was for the last drought or you have had that in place in previous**
104 **drought as well?**

105 G: We had that in place for 2 or 3 droughts since I have been farming

106 **I: How do you see S57 in terms of the information...**

107 G: It is a disaster. I think it should be got rid of. I think we shouldn't be treated
108 differently from anybody using water from the river or a borehole or anything else. It
109 doesn't matter whether it is public water supply or industry...all should be treated
110 the same.

111 **I: When there is a drought and you need information, where do you go**
112 **normally?**

113 G: The EA will talk to us. We have our WAG, they can be the intermediary, they can
114 be the person in the middle

115 **I: How the governmental bodies and farmers associations have helped you to**
116 **deal with droughts in the past? Do you think they have been helpful?**

117 G: Not really, no. It is about helping yourself and helping as a group of farmers.

118 **I: So what aspects would you like to see improved in that particular case?**
119 **What the EA or other organizations can do to help you more?**

120 G: I don't think they can do very much more to help at all. The trouble is the EA
121 don't know what happen on the farm. They don't know how we abstract. They don't
122 know how reels and booms and trickle work. Initially they say: OK, you can irrigate 4
123 hours every other day...Well, if you have a reel and it is got 400 m run, it takes 14-
124 15 hours to get it. So if they don't understand it...you need to look after yourself and
125 negotiate between them all and try to let them understand how we do it.

126 **I: When you are in a drought and you have to make some decisions, what kind**
127 **of strategies do you normally apply? You have a list here but maybe you are**
128 **using other ones**

129 G: You can have all the strategies you like, none of them is really good if there is no
130 water...We try to do normal things like trying to irrigate at night. My thought is you
131 look after your crop to the best of your ability and if the water runs out today well so
132 be it. But every day you look after your crop you are a day nearer to getting a rain
133 which is gonna help you anyway. So you can have whatever strategy you want but if
134 there is no water, there is no water...

135 **I: Yes...that is true. Maybe you give priority to your high value crops or you**
136 **decide to irrigate them all...**

137 G: Yes, you try to look after your most important ones first

138 **I: Have you ever participated in water trading?**

139 G: Not because we haven't been allowed to

140 **I: You said that after the 1988-92 drought you built a reservoir. Have you done**
141 **anything else after the last drought episode?**

142 G: No, just everything we do and wherever we go to grow crops we try to get
143 involved in building winter storage reservoirs. That is the only way to do it so you
144 are not affected by drought

145 **I: Would you say that your attitude towards drought risks has evolved after**
146 **being affected by several drought episodes in the past?**

147 G: Not really...well, yes it has, from the beginning. Instead of relying on what is
148 there you have to look after yourself and make sure you got in a reservoir as I keep
149 saying

150 **I: We have been talking about this before, and you said that in order to**
151 **improve drought management in the UK you will remove S57, what else would**
152 **you like to be changed?**

153 G: Everybody needs to be treated the same. S57 says that water abstractors or
154 people abstracting water for irrigating crops are the first ones to be restricted. Why
155 should somebody taking water for industry be treated any different? We should all
156 be treated the same, is the same water and all pay the same for it

157 **I: How would you rate drought risk for your business, from 0 to 10?**

158 G: At the present situation I would put it as a 4

159 **I: Looking into the future, would you say that water scarcity and drought are**
160 **going to become a greater problem?**

161 G: Highly likely

162 **I: Will you be willing to do something about it in your farm?**

163 G: Well, I do, I have. Going into reservoirs that is all you can do