



NATIONAL BEEF ASSOCIATION

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The future is bright for efficient beef farmers and for NBA in the north

Beef farmers from Northumberland and Cumbria were told they could face their future with optimism when they met for a National Beef Association northern meeting at Hexham this week, chaired by David Thomlinson of Borderway, Carlisle.

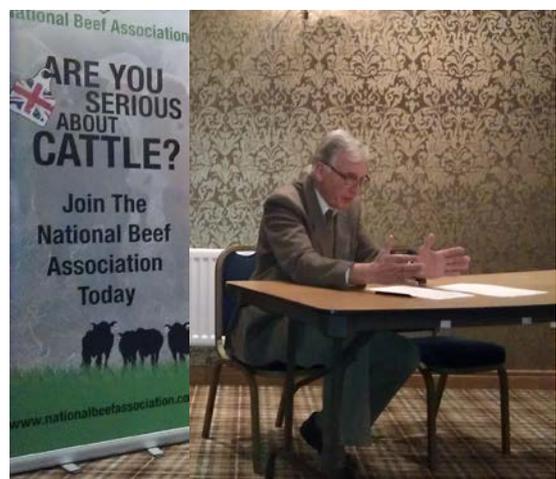
Former Association chief executive, Robert Forster, said farmers should be confident that strong global demand for beef would continue to reinforce incomes but to succeed farms must counter simultaneous rises in input costs through building efficiencies.

“All you have to do is spend less than you earn. Future income will soon be boosted by a 400p per dwkg pay out on commercial R4L cattle that is already being led by 400-410p payments for top-shelf Angus stock,” he explained.

“Increased costs can be countered by, for example, analyzing feed, testing soil fertility and pH, treating for liver fluke and balancing cow numbers against overheads like machinery costs and labour.”

“More attention must be paid to cow fertility too. Back in 2004 just 43 per cent of sucklers dropped a calf each year. Last year it rose to 63 per cent – but the calving interval was still too long at 442 days.”

“The target has to be 365 days and if this was achieved then you and other UK farmers would



Giving a view on the beef market, Robert Forster

produce 21 per cent more calves a year, preferably bred from high EBV bulls, while cow numbers, and cow costs, remained static.”

Also speaking at the meeting was Andrew Jamieson, Agricultural Advisor for H and H Land and Property in Carlisle who warned that farmers should be careful not to anticipate the eventual, extraordinarily complicated, 2014-2020 CAP reform package.

He said delays were inevitable because agreement between the European Commission, EU agriculture ministers, and the European Parliament over fundamental issues like the budget had still to be resolved – and discussion on the nitty-gritty of future single farm payment had scarcely begun.

“Last year many farmers jumped the gun by ploughing out pasture because they thought it would help them retain management flexibility after 2014. Unfortunately many will regret this because a shift in policy emphasis has already made it look unnecessary,” Andrew explained.

“Caution is also required if long term management changes are planned while future CAP rules are still under discussion. Eligibility for future SFP payments must be protected and there is a real danger this could be jeopardised if premature business arrangements are made without taking informed advise.”

The night’s third speaker, former NBA chairman Duff Burrell, was anxious that North of England beef farmers understood that new rules introduced on January 1st would restrict the off-movement of cattle if their farm lay within a three kilometre radius of a holding on which a fresh TB outbreak had been confirmed.

“Many of you think TB is a curse that only hits South of England farmers. However movement of cattle off farms within these new surveillance areas will be restricted until they have completed three, clear, TB tests. This could create feed and accommodation problems if a neighbouring farm went down with TB,” he said.

NBA have made significant headway in recent months with a new national Board of Directors and a strong, new business approach. One such area for growth is the northern region which will be revived by the highly respected auctioneer and Director of Harrison and Hetherington, David Thomlinson, a newly appointed Board member of NBA and acting Chair of Northern region.

“Members felt the meeting was very worthwhile and informative and we look forward to leading more discussions throughout the north to stimulate debate and rebuild the regional NBA” commented Mr Thomlinson.



Duff Burrell (left) and David Thomlinson lead a discussion on the implications of TB

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