

# FARM & COUNTRY

In association  
with Coleg  
Llysfasi College

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## Optimism shown in livestock upsurge

WELSH farmers appear to be increasingly optimistic about the long term future of the red meat industry.

New figures released by the Welsh Assembly Government show that in 2010 the number of sheep, cows and pigs increased compared with 2009.

The Welsh sheep flock grew by 6,000 to 8,244,000 head. Significantly, this included a 35 rise in breeding ewes to a 1m

head. The number of cattle by 25, bringing the national herd back to 2008 levels at 241,000 head.

There was also a big rise in breeding pigs, with numbers climbing 25% to more than 4,000.

John Richards, of HCC, said: "These figures are very encouraging and demonstrate that there is growing confidence among those who work on the front line of the Welsh red meat industry."

Analysts expect 2011 to be tough for beef producers, due to soaring feed and fertiliser costs. As a result, falls in store cattle prices may partially compensate for beef finishers.

Fight supplies should keep lamb prices buoyant, even allowing for a bumper lamb crop. As ever, exchange rates will be crucial to sheep profitability, though overseas demand is expected to remain firm.



From left: Tim Wooldridge with food suppliers Gerry Moreton and Heather Kynaston, with Eagles Meadow manager Kevin Critchley and NMC's Caroline Dawson

# Fish, fowl, fruit

By **ANDREW FORGRAVE**  
Rural Affairs Editor

AN AREA once associated with coal and heavy industry is quietly reinventing itself as a Mecca for fine food.

Under the guidance of the Wrexham Food First scheme, local producers are reporting growing enthusiasm for the area's vegetables, meats and dairy products.

Free-range egg producer Nant Ucha, of Garth, Llansgollen, said its customer base has doubled in the 12 months since the scheme was launched by Northern Marches Cymru (NMC).

Now NMC has launched the first-ever Wrexham Food Directory to showcase the produce of 24 scheme members.

It was put together by NMC local food project officer Caroline Dawson, who said the abundance of fine food produced in the county could create a "nine-course meal fit for royalty".

She said: "We were pretty confident we'd find an abundance of fresh fruit and vegetable producers as well as those of meat and dairy products."

"What did take us by surprise was the fantastic range of other products we came across, from mouth-watering cakes to wonderful preserves, perfect pies, tasty cheeses and heavenly honey."

"Then there was the fish and game, the

## COUNTY PUSHES FOODIE IMAGE

wine, the chocolate, the ice cream"

The director's Lunch took place at Wrexham fishmongers Tim's for Fish, which is based at Eagles Meadow.

Owner Tim Wooldridge, who last year hit the headlines when supplying Irish supergroup U2, relocated from Wrex-

ham's Butchers' Market to expand the range of local produce he offered.

His shop has since become a hub for the area's top food products.

"We've got everything from sausages to sauces," he said.

"We've got the Blueberry sauces from



Brieffield and Flavoured Seven juices from Bangor on Dee.

"Our customers really do appreciate the locally produced food which comes from just a few miles away and is delivered here in 10 minutes."

NMC has already launched a website, organised courses and arranged the first Wrexham Food Festival.

Caroline Dawson added: "What unites the producers is their passion."

"The food directory is much more than simply a list of names and produce, it is also a celebration of where we live."

## Egg farm hatches great little business

NANT Ucha Eggs, which began as a semi-retirement project, has blossomed into a fully fledged business supporting three family members.

The enterprise is based on a former dairy farm at Garth, Llansgollen, which switched to beef production with the advent of milk quotas.

Owners Tony Kynaston, 71, and wife, Chris, 67, began keeping layers as a means of downsizing their farming operations. Surplus birds is now let for grazing.

In the past year the business has really taken off under the direction of Wrexham Food First.

"Caroline Dawson, who runs the scheme, has been fantastic in promoting the business," said Chris.

The family farm hosts 4,000 birds in a converted cable shed, mostly Lohmann Browns.

Since last January Nant Ucha has increased its customer base from 30 to 60.

Tony and Chris hand-pack the eggs and their daughter, Heather, oversees sales and deliveries.

"We went out knocking on doors," said Chris. "We've had a few knock-backs and we've made a few mistakes, but we've had some lucky breaks too."

"Tony and Heather approached Hawarden Farm Shop and were told by the manager he'd think about it."

"As they walked off, the manager ran after them and placed an order."

"We now deliver 10 cases of 15 dozen eggs each week and the farm shop has been marvellous."

## INSIDE

Welsh farmers leading a green revolution

PAGES 28-29

Search & rescue scrambled after my silly error

PAGE 31

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