

**AS DELIVERED BY THE PRINCE OF WALES AT THE FARMERS WEEKLY AWARDS 2020 ON
SUNDAY 7TH FEBRUARY**

FARMERS WEEKLY LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD VIDEO MESSAGE

Ladies and gentlemen, I cannot tell you how surprised and touched I am to be receiving this award, but very sad that current circumstances prevent this happening in person. The Award means a great deal to me and I am enormously grateful to Adam for these embarrassingly kind words about my rather inadequate efforts over the years.

It's encouraging to think that I might have made a difference to some of the issues that I mind about, but the point I really want to make is that I have not done any of these things alone. Whenever something has been achieved it is because I have tried to bring people together to recognize the case for action and then everyone has worked hard to make things happen.

So in accepting this award, I want to acknowledge, above all, the people who cared as much as I did about the same issues. I cannot possibly name them all, but they know who they are – and I hope they are as proud as I am of what we have achieved together.

Now, I am sure some people will be wondering if there is any underlying principle in what I have been trying to achieve, or – to put it another way - was there any method in my madness? Well, yes, there was, and indeed there still is.

I care passionately about trying to help the cause of sustainable farming, wherever and however it is practised. To me, that means farming that respects balance and natural limits, understands the importance of diversity and helps farmers and rural communities to thrive through producing healthy, nutritious food, while maintaining and enhancing the distinctive landscapes that make this country so special. From my own experience, I have particular admiration and affinity for those farming families who know their own land intimately and understand how to manage their crops and livestock from season to season in a way that is firmly rooted in experience, locally appropriate and, to my mind, largely irreplaceable.

Specialist food producers occupy a similarly important place in the community, particularly in the face of a sometimes overwhelming, fashionable drive for homogenization. That is why, as Patron of The Specialist Cheesemakers' Association, I found myself all those years ago battling to help a whole new generation of determinedly courageous artisan cheesemakers overcome some of the early obstacles they encountered.

Despite occasional suggestions to the contrary, I am not against progress and I welcome new ideas and new technology - provided that they are used thoughtfully and appropriately as tools to achieve an aim, rather than as something to displace or subjugate the natural processes that should sit at the heart of agricultural practice.

I also happen to believe that there are dangers in behaving as though we are the first generation to try and make a living from the land, with careless denigration of the hard-earned wisdom of our forefathers and disregard for the precautionary principle and the lessons of history.

When I became Patron of the organization now known as Garden Organic, I found that they shared my concern that our precious legacy of heritage varieties of vegetables and fruit was being rashly discarded in favour of a dangerously reduced number of commercial ones. With the Rare Breeds Survival Trust we

fought a comparable battle to prevent the extinction of what is left of our unique, native breeds. In the same way that heritage seeds now form a precious, living gene bank for crops, the remaining rare breeds have at last been recognized as a remarkably effective means of reducing inputs and returning vitality to our soils. The proof is in the numbers. I am told that there are now 30,000 herds and flocks of native breeds in the UK, contributing more than £700 million to local economies.

A somewhat similar situation arose in 1990 when I persuaded the Duchy of Cornwall to help rescue Brogdale Farm, in Kent, the home of the National Fruit Collections, which included over 4,000 varieties of fruit, but most notably over 2,400 varieties of apples, from an uncertain future. This precious cornucopia of genetic diversity is also now safe, in the form of the National Fruit Collections Trust.

As we look to the future, I firmly believe that the most constructive and profitable path for agriculture in this country will be through telling a unique story of high standards of environmental sensitivity, animal welfare and food quality, while stressing local provenance, native breeds and sustainable management. To me, this niche approach plays to our undoubted strengths as an island nation, as opposed to struggling to compete in global commodity markets.

In 1990, I managed – somehow! – to establish what turned out to be one of the earliest organic food brands, Duchy Originals, which I hoped at the time would benefit the environment, family farmers and raise some money for my Charitable Fund. Over the last 31 years, and through the partnership with Waitrose for these past ten years, sales of Duchy Originals products have now raised over £24 million for charity, including The Prince's Countryside Fund, which has helped to support farming families and rural communities, giving grants to over 400 organizations, from Caithness to Cornwall, and commissioned much-needed research enabling informed decision-making.

The Farmers' Marketing Initiatives I helped to establish in the North Highlands of Scotland, the Cambrian Mountains in Wales, on Dartmoor and, for a short time, in the Peak District of Staffordshire were part of an attempt to show how marketing cooperatives, based on provenance and high quality agricultural products, could benefit clusters of farmers in less favoured areas.

With the enthusiastic involvement of a number of celebrity chefs and food specialists, I also tried to help sheep farmers obtain a better price for their cull ewes through my Mutton Renaissance Campaign and, with the assistance of another group of people from the textile, processing and fashion sectors, we have done our best over the past eleven years to help raise awareness of wool as one of the most sustainable and eco-friendly natural materials on this planet through my Wool Campaign.

The extent to which any of this has made a difference is not for me to say, but I really am most grateful for this award. It reminds me that at the end of the day Agriculture should be, as George Washington said, "the most healthful, most useful and most noble employment of man."

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