

Chelmsford Monitor Farm

Meeting title: Personal resilience – how to enjoy farming (*Final meeting*)

Date: 7 February 2020

Speakers: Heather Wildman (Saviour Associates), Martin Williams (Tump Farm)



Martin Williams

- “Resilience, I think, starts with your people”
- Farming is a bit of a rollercoaster – people come at farming from all sorts of different directions
- For some, there can be a weight and burden of expectation....is the farm a millstone?
- But, there are plenty of reasons to be cheerful...
 - o Seasonality
 - o Different job every day
 - o Fun and flexibility
 - o Aspirational
- Hardest thing with farming is the weather....but that doesn't stop you doing it, because its an enjoyable job
- Don't miss an opportunity – don't wait to change...take the opportunity.
- What motivates me to farm?
 - o “I'm going to do what I can better and more profitably”
 - o Move away from “fire engine” work
 - o Change to business structure



“Farming is absolutely brilliant – enjoy what you do!”

Heather Wildman

- Think...”would you work for you?”
- Challenge = the unknown
- Get to know your business
- Take a fortnight’s holiday, whenever you can
- Create a **vision and a mission statement:**
 - o VISION: dream, goal, ambition
 - o COMMUNICATION: write it down, say the words out loud, share it with others who will be involved or impacted, and most importantly, own it!

Example vision and mission statement:

Mission: Martin & Penny

- To enjoy farming in a profitable business in a sustainable way with a positive work life balance
- An integrated business of arable & grassland farming, contracting, and let properties
- To be a happy team of people who enjoy and are engaged in their everyday work

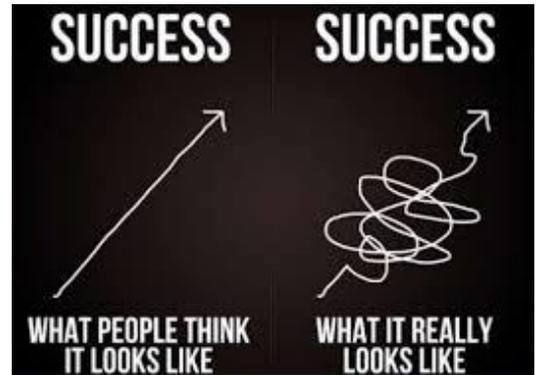
Vision:

- Work to be planned, easily managed, reduced stress
- A love and desire to be at work
- To enjoy opportunities of the physical side of farming
- To be chilled, happy and to have a tidy farm

Values:

- Organised, trust worthy, helpful, reliable, solution focused,

- COLLABORATION: Can you achieve your vision alone? If not, who or what do you need to help you?
- “When you truly believe in what you are doing, it shows. And it pays. Winners in life are those who are excited about where they’re going.”
- Consider what are your personal goals over the next 5 years? These could include: your personal goals, business, family and the whole picture together.



Chelmsford Monitor Farm – Last meeting conclusions

Christy and Hew Willett, when summarising the three years as Monitor Farmers, quoted the following as being instrumental to learnings and business progression over the three year programme:

- Farmbench – not only talking and being part of the Arable Business Group, but its been the biggest benefit that we’ve had and the biggest return on profitability
- Sold a large tractor and changed from full inversion tillage to strip till to direct drilling over the three years, which has allowed the machinery for the business to become more streamlined.
- Taken the risk out of establishing crops and have gone back into sheep (lambing outdoors in April; picked the Exlana for its traits), which has enabled the sheep to graze the cover crops in the rotation.
- Broadened learning along the way and tried new approaches: herbal leys, growing cover crops for seed.
- Massively widened the rotation – used to be just wheat, OSR and beans, now seven or eight crops, which has improved the spread of workload and work-life balance.
- The drill try-out got everyone talking.
- Off the back of the drainage meeting, quotes have now been sought for draining some of the fields.
- Interested in being a part of future technology, such as the Small Robot Company work.
- Christy’s speaker highlights included:
 - Becky Willson – “the voluntary is about to be compulsory”
 - Simon Cowell – “light years ahead of us, especially with 20 years of no P and K”
 - Stretch – “farming is fun”

SWOT Analysis

The group conducted a SWOT analysis of Christy and Hew’s farm business and the wider industry at the final meeting. This was then compared with the SWOT analysis that was completed at the first meeting in 2017 and the results can be seen below:

SWOT Analysis 2017

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Christy/Hew working relationship	Rotation – future of OSR?	Location	Loss of active ingredients
Diversification – cash flow and location	Machinery depreciation	Producer to consumer link	Peas/beans as EFA
Open to new ideas	Spread of land	More diversification	Corbyn!
Willingness to analyse/adopt	Workforce	Agri-environment	Currency fluctuations
Grain storage	New system mistakes	Speciality crops	Restricted access
Owned land	Reliance on non-farm income	New buildings	Brexit
Family labour	Milling wheat only	Capacity for more land	Weather/climate change
Flexible machinery		Joint ventures/share farming	Public liability
		Green gym	Grass weeds

SWOT Analysis 2020

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
Forward looking	Reliance on fossil fuels	Brexit	Brexit
Owner-occupier	Reliance on two people	More use of tech	Hew’s love of shooting/skiing
Dynamic duo	Limited to one current system that works for them	Carbon capture	Weather
Willingness to embrace change	Can you afford the re-investment to cultivations?	Christy’s retirement	Trade imports
Cut costs	Infrastructure – wider	Constant experimenting	Health
Location	Losing chemistry	Urban fringe	Urban fringe

School links	Short-term costs of experiments	Location and diversification	Government policy
Diversification	Echo chamber	Make the most of Monitor Farm contacts	Loss of actives (glyphosate)
Improving public perception			Climate change – long term
Integrated livestock			

Christy and Hew have developed and taken forward many of the strengths of the business and their approach, have made the most of new opportunities through the Monitor Farm programme already and are looking at further building on these going forwards, focussed on costs and are in a fantastic place with a successful business to take on the threats for the industry in the future.

Thank you for your time being our Chelmsford Monitor Farmers, Christy and Hew!

AHDB resources

- Understand your business costs with AHDB’s benchmarking tool Farmbench at ahdb.org.uk/farmbench
- Monitoring tools are available at ahdb.org.uk/tools
- Sign up to market information and research newsletters at ahdb.org.uk/keeping-in-touch
- Find out what’s going on at other Monitor Farms and Strategic Farms at ahdb.org.uk/farm-excellence
- All AHDB events can be found at ahdb.org.uk/events
- For guidance on how Brexit will impact your business, see ahdb.org.uk/brexit

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